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ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-2103

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June 12, 2017

Secretary Ryan Zinke  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing in response to your current review of National Monuments, and would like to express my strong support for protecting these national treasures. One monument of great significance to Massachusetts is the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, which scientists have identified as a unique biodiversity hot spot, home to ancient deep-sea coral communities that thrive in the canyons and on the seamounts, and endangered whales, sea turtles, fish and seabirds.

The history, culture, and economy of Massachusetts have been inextricably linked to the health of our ocean for centuries. Massachusetts is home to one of the nation's most historic fishing industries, and remains the lifeblood of many communities. We are also home to world-class ocean research institutions and beautiful vacation destinations, both of which are sustained by our connection to the ocean. We have a generational responsibility to protect the health of our ocean so that it will continue to be a sustainable resource for our children and grandchildren. That's why I supported President Obama's creation of the first national marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean.

The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument fulfills the requirements of the Antiquities Act by being the smallest area compatible with protecting the monument's highly-significant ecological and geologic features, which are objects of scientific interest. The monument area has been an important study site for researchers, including from academic institutions and aquaria in the region. In recent years, research expeditions to this spectacular undersea world have yielded not only new and rare species but also new understandings about deep sea ecology, and fostered growing appreciation of the unique nature of the area. These ocean oases serve as a reference site for scientists working to understand rapid changes taking place across the spectrum of habitats represented in the area.

The monument boundary and uses were also the results of an extensive public consultation process. The Department of Commerce held a town hall meeting in New England and invited written public comments for a year. Officials met numerous times with stakeholder groups – fishing industry representatives, local stakeholders, elected officials, and conservation groups – in New England and Washington, DC. Fishing industry representatives were engaged in the

process for more than a year before the monument was designated. And the Administration listened to and acted upon their concerns by reducing the size of the originally proposed monument and including a 7-year grace period during which the lobster and crab fisheries will be allowed to operate in the monument. Recreational fishing is also permanently protected.

Our oceans are changing at an unprecedented rate, and we must protect critical areas if we are to continue to rely on the sea's bounty and beauty. Keeping this monument intact is not only critical to our history, but also our future. For all of these reasons, I support the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument as it was designated by President Obama and ask that you do not attempt to modify its boundaries or uses, or otherwise diminish its value to our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Niki Tsongas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress