

3-7-2018

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## Gov. Ralph Northam Discusses Offshore Drilling at Blue Planet Forum

March 07, 2018

By Betsy Hnath (<mailto:ehnath@odu.edu>)

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam joined a panel of distinguished guests at the Blue Planet Forum at Old Dominion University on March 5. They discussed the proposal to permit oil and gas drilling off Virginia's coast.

The forum series, established in 2008 and presented by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in partnership with ODU, educates and engages the public on environmental issues affecting Hampton Roads and the nation.

Northam has been a vocal opponent of offshore drilling in coastal Virginia waters after President Donald Trump proposed allowing it off the Atlantic Coast. Trump's administration wants to lease portions of the Outer Continental Shelf for energy development.

Northam began with a request: "First, I'd like everyone here to admit that global warming is real, whether you are a scientist or not. You don't need to look far to see it. We know all about sea-level rise here in Hampton Roads."

The governor expressed his appreciation for the University and its research efforts on resiliency and sea-level rise.

"It's great to be back here on the campus of ODU," Northam said. "We were able to work, years ago, with Old Dominion University, and we were the ones that initiated the study on sea-level rise, and because of that we've been able to apply for federal grants and now have a resiliency program."

Sea-level rise is a key factor in Northam's stand against offshore drilling.

"Because of sea-level rise, we need to stop putting carbon into the atmosphere," Northam said. "We need to wean ourselves from fossil fuel, so the last thing that we need to be doing is drilling for more."

Northam also cited risks to NASA and military logistical training, tourism and a \$75 million Virginia Aquaculture.

Joining Northam on the panel were Chesapeake Bay Foundation President Will Baker, Norfolk



Norfolk City Council member, Andria McClellan, and Virginia Governor, Ralph Northam discuss offshore drilling at the Blue Planet Forum.

City Council member Andria McClellan, Professor and President Emeritus of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences Don Boesch, and Bruce Thompson, chief executive officer of GoldKey PHR.

Morris Foster, vice president for research at the University, thanked the roughly 200 people in attendance for their continued commitment to environmental issues. He emphasized the negative potential economic and ecological impacts of offshore drilling to the region.

Foster also highlighted Old Dominion's continuing work with the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency in collaboration with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the Virginia Coastal Policy Center at The College of William and Mary.

"Just last week, an interdisciplinary ODU team, along with William and Mary Law School and local sponsors, held a series of hands-on workshops to assist the tourism industry in Virginia Beach and Williamsburg," Foster said. "The center provides scientific and technical support across the Commonwealth and builds resilience to recurrent flooding and supports a thriving coastal community in Virginia."

Baker, the president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, expressed his gratitude for Old Dominion's continued partnership in the Blue Planet Forum.

"Old Dominion University has been an absolutely fabulous partner. Consistent, generous, hospitable - we couldn't ask for more," Baker said.

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