**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO PROVIDE THAT A STATEWIDE ADVISORY REFERENDUM MUST BE CONDUCTED BY THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION AT THE SAME TIME AS THE 2018 PRIMARY ELECTION ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OFFSHORE OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY SHOULD BE PERMITTED IF CONDUCTED IN A MANNER THAT USES THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF SAFETY AND MOST ADVANCED AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY TO VIGILANTLY PROTECT SOUTH CAROLINA’S PRECIOUS NATURAL RESOURCES, VITAL TOURISM INDUSTRY, AND UNIQUE QUALITY OF LIFE WHILE ADVANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH THE CREATION OF ENERGY INDUSTRY JOBS AND THE USE OF INCREASED REVENUE TO THE STATE RESULTING IN A TANGIBLE BENEFIT TO THE TAXPAYERS.

Whereas, in 2007, the South Carolina Natural Gas Exploration Feasibility Study Committee created by the General Assembly reported its findings on the feasibility and propriety of offshore drilling along the South Carolina coast, concluding that the State should consider the development of offshore drilling pending disposition of several issues, including protection of natural resources and quality of life issues, protection of tourism interests, and the use of acceptable royalty revenue sharing agreements, among others; and

Whereas, in 2017, the President of the United States signed an executive order to allow expanded offshore exploration and drilling for oil and natural gas, which has drawn praise as an opportunity for economic development but also has raised concerns about potential harmful impacts on our State’s precious natural resources, vital tourism industry, and unique quality of life; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds value in seeking a balanced approach to offshore exploration and drilling of oil and natural gas, conducted in a manner that protects our natural resources, tourism industry, and quality of life as a matter important not only today but for future generations; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds it crucial to solicit feedback on this important issue from the general public in our State by means of an advisory referendum, which will not only provide guidance to the State but also to our federal Congressional delegation as to what actions should be taken to advance our economic interests while protecting our natural resources, tourism industry, and unique quality of life. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. A statewide advisory referendum must be conducted by the State Election Commission at the same time as the 2018 primary election on the question of whether or not the development of an offshore oil and natural gas industry should be permitted if conducted in a manner that uses the highest standards of safety and most advanced available technology to vigilantly protect South Carolina’s precious natural resources, vital tourism industry, and unique quality of life while advancing economic growth through the creation of energy industry jobs and the use of increased revenue to the State resulting in a tangible benefit to the taxpayers. The state election laws shall apply to the referendum, with the appropriate changes being made. The State Board of Canvassers shall publish the results of the referendum and certify them to the Governor and each house of the General Assembly.

(B) Ballots must be provided to all qualified electors participating in the referendum with the following question printed on the ballot:

“Do you favor the development of an offshore oil and natural gas industry if conducted in a manner that uses the highest standards of safety and most advanced available technology to vigilantly protect South Carolina’s precious natural resources, vital tourism industry, and unique quality of life while advancing economic growth through the creation of energy industry jobs and the use of increased revenue to the State resulting in a tangible benefit to the taxpayers?

Yes 

No 

Those voting in favor of the question shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the word ‘Yes’, and those voting against the question shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the word ‘No’.”

(C) The cost of the referendum must be paid from funds appropriated to the State Election Commission and the results of the referendum are advisory only.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑