INTRODUCTION
Offshore wind holds enormous potential for communities across the nation. According to a 2018 Department of Energy report, there are enough planned offshore wind projects to power about 8 million homes. These projects are being developed in 13 states, and most will be online by 2030. The first few projects will be erected with largely European parts and labor. But with over 24,000 megawatts in the queue, there is ample opportunity for those parts and labor to be American made. The question now is how much of this existing industry calls Virginia home.

To make Virginia attractive to the wind industry and attract manufacturing firms to Hampton Roads, Virginia must create policy certainty and demonstrate confidence in its own offshore wind projects.

BACKGROUND
In September 2013, the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leased to Dominion Energy a 12,799-acre commercial lease area located about 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach. When fully developed, the lease area will be capable of producing 2,000MW of wind energy - enough to power 500,000 homes.

In addition to the commercial lease area, Dominion is also the project lead with Ørsted on an adjacent 2,135-acre research area leased in 2014 to the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) called the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project (CVOW). The project involves erecting two six-megawatt wind turbines. CVOW will be the first offshore wind project and the nation. CVOW will be the first offshore wind project and the nation.

One of the greatest advantages for Hampton Roads is the capacity to handle very large pieces of steel. There are over 8,000 large and small parts that go into one wind turbine. Steel makes up most of the large parts including turbine blades, towers, foundations, and offshore substations. Two port sites in Hampton Roads could be upgraded, and within two years stand ready for investment by steel fabricators keen on selling key components parts to the first wave of offshore wind projects.

Virginia has the largest East Coast pool of experienced maritime workers, with more than 24,000 full-time jobs in shipbuilding and ship repair alone – more than New York and all New England states combined.

Virginia's Offshore Wind office also has a dedicated workforce development plan. Onshore work is proceeding this summer, and construction in the research lease area is slated for the summer of 2020.

Lessons learned from this pilot project could improve the entire U.S. offshore wind industry. As more projects come online, turbine parts will become increasingly American-made, driving down the costs and creating thousands of jobs. Several Virginia-based studies indicate that full development of the Commonwealth's offshore wind could create between 10,000 and 14,000 jobs. Both the installation of turbines and the creation of a regional supply chain will provide not only high-paying, career-length jobs but could also prompt essential job programs in low-income communities throughout Hampton Roads.

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Full development of both the CVOW pilot project and the commercial lease area are critical for the Commonwealth. Offshore wind not only addresses the threat of climate change, it also acts as a major economic driver. Virginia's policymakers should embrace the opportunity to be a national leader on renewable energy and job creation.