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CONTACT: [Jill Strait](#) or [Spencer Pederson](#) or [Crystal Feldman](#)
202-226-9019

Natural Resources Committee Republicans Examine Economic and Environmental Recovery at Gulf of Mexico Field Hearing

HOUMA, LA – Today, the House Natural Resources Committee held a field hearing in Houma, LA entitled “*Gulf of Mexico: A Focus on Community Recovery and New Response Technology*.” At the hearing, Members heard first hand from local citizens and businesses about the status of recovery efforts, the impacts of the Administration’s *de facto* moratorium and the deployment of new technology to improve the safety of offshore drilling. The hearing was attended by Committee Chairman Doc Hastings and Representatives John Fleming, Steve Southerland, Jeff Landry and Charles Boustany.

“My colleagues from the Gulf region have made sure that everyone in our Nation’s Capitol knows about the real economic pain and hardship being felt here in the Gulf. We’ve held numerous hearings on this topic back in D.C. but I’m pleased to be here in Houma to see and hear firsthand from those who have been directly impacted. For the past year, offshore energy operations in the Gulf have been sidelined – leaving thousands of out of work. Rigs have left the Gulf for foreign counties, and with gasoline prices rising toward \$4 per gallon, the United States cannot afford to shutter American energy production. We all know energy production should be done in a safe, responsible manner. There have been significant changes in the past year to improve offshore drilling and response. As more is learned, Congress, the Administration and industry will continue to respond appropriately,” **said Chairman Doc Hasting (WA-04)**. ([Click here to read Chairman Hastings’ full opening statement](#))

Lori LeBlanc, Executive Director of the Gulf Economic Survival Team, and Lori Davis, President of Rig-Chem, Inc., discussed the economic impacts of the Obama Administration’s *de facto* moratorium. LeBlanc noted that “*this moratorium was not on big oil, it was a moratorium on middle class Americans who had good paying American jobs working for small American businesses who support the American energy industry.*” Davis discussed how her small business has had to implement a spending freeze, reduce health care benefits for employees, diminish savings and take out lines of credit in order to stay afloat.

“As we remember the one-year anniversary of the tragic oil spill, today’s hearing is an opportunity for us to listen and see firsthand the ongoing impacts and effects of the oil spill and de facto moratorium by the Obama Administration and to see the new technology that will make drilling safer. This hearing underscores the need for an energy policy that creates jobs and ends our dependence on foreign oil. With gas prices spiking, Americans can no longer afford the Obama Administration’s destructive energy policy,” **said Rep. John Fleming (LA-04)**.

Jerome Zeringue, Deputy Executive Director for the Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, discussed how the Administration's *de facto* moratorium also impacts the environment since a portion of offshore revenues are dedicated to environmental restoration. *"The moratorium prevents the restoration of Louisiana's coastal wetlands. This policy installed under the auspices of environmental protection actually results in increased environmental impacts, the loss of American jobs and a large trade debt."*

"My North and Northwest Florida district felt the crippling impact of last year's Gulf oil spill – both economically and environmentally. As we reach the one-year anniversary of the tragedy this week, it is time to get our coastal communities back to work. Today's hearing provides a valuable opportunity for me and my Gulf Coast colleagues to evaluate methods for accelerating our economic recovery and protecting our natural resources from potential accidents in the future," **said Rep. Steve Southerland (FL-02).**

Kimberly Chauvin, owner of a seafood dock and three seafood companies, discussed the impacts on the commercial fishing industry and the ongoing problems with the President's compensation fund administered by Ken Feinberg. *"The frustration levels are at an all-time high within our communities with the Pay Czar's antics. It's frustrating knowing that no matter what you do there is no accountability for what is happening to us."*

"South Louisiana plays a critical role in domestic energy production. The opportunity to host a full committee field hearing ensured our people's needs were heard as Congress moves forward with legislation impacting energy exploration and production in the Gulf of Mexico. I am thankful for the leadership of Chairman Hastings and his decision to bring the committee to Houma to hear directly from our people about our jobs, our coast, and our way of life. Today's field hearing highlighted the real consequences of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy and the disastrous Obama oil-free energy policy," **said Rep. Jeff Landry (LA-03).**

Finally, witnesses discussed new technology that is improving the safety of offshore drilling. Owen Kratz, President and Chief Executive Officer of Helix Energy Solutions Group, Inc., and Martin W. Massey, Chief Executive Officer of Marine Well Containment Company, discussed the new response and containment technology that has been developed over the past year. Martin said, *"this system significantly improves upon previous U.S. Gulf of Mexico response capabilities. We now have ready access to the equipment and resources to cap or contain oil from a deepwater well-control incident."*

"As we approach the one year anniversary of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, it should never be forgotten that 11 brave men lost their lives working to deliver the energy all Americans use every day. The disaster is an ongoing tragedy for Louisiana and the Gulf Coast region, our economy, and our environment. The difficult lessons learned from this incident must be implemented as part of safety standards for future offshore exploration. As gas prices skyrocket, there is no excuse for preventing energy production off our coast. I am pleased to participate in this hearing with Chairman Hastings and hear first-hand from Louisianans directly impacted by this disaster," **said Rep. Charles Boustany (LA-07).**

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