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Two Department Officials Called to Testify on Edits made to Gulf Drilling Moratorium Report, Issued Subpoenas for Documents

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) today sent [letters](#) to two Interior Department officials inviting them to appear at a Full Committee hearing on September 13, 2012 to answer questions regarding the Department of the Interior's Drilling Moratorium Report that was edited to appear as though the moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico was supported by a panel of engineering experts when it was not. The two Obama Administration officials invited to this hearing are Neal Kemkar and Mary Katherine Ishee. [Click here](#) to read the invitation letter.

Chairman Hastings today also issued [subpoenas](#) for Kemkar and Ishee to provide, before the hearing, copies of all documents that were created, sent, or received by them between April 26, 2010 and June 30, 2010 related to the development, editing, review, issuance, response, or reaction to the Drilling Moratorium Report.

On August 1st the Full Committee approved a [motion](#) to provide the Chairman with the authority to issue subpoenas to five Obama Administration officials, including Kemkar and Ishee, and potentially others who have direct knowledge or involvement in the drafting, editing or reviewing of the Drilling Moratorium Report to testify. The subpoena authority came after a July 25th Full Committee [oversight hearing](#) had to be postponed because the Interior Department refused, less than 20 hours before the hearing, to confirm the attendance of the five invited Department officials. Prior to the announcement of the July 25th hearing, the Department refused requests, first made in February, to conduct on-the-record interviews of the five individuals by Committee staff.

According to written and verbal communications from the Interior Department, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has committed that these individuals will appear voluntarily at a rescheduled hearing. To ensure attendance, Chairman Hastings requested that Kemkar and Ishee personally confirm in writing by September 4th their intention to appear voluntarily at the September 13th hearing. Failure to provide the requested confirmation by the deadline may result in further action being taken as necessary to compel their cooperation.

"The Department has ignored a subpoena for documents, refused requests for transcribed interviews with five Department officials, refused to confirm the attendance of the five officials at a July Committee hearing, and forced the Committee to vote to authorize the issuance of subpoenas to compel these and potentially other individuals to testify. It took

*subpoenas becoming a reality for the Department to agree to have these individuals appear voluntarily,” said **Chairman Hastings**. “However, it appears there is now a commitment for witnesses to answer questions from the Committee. To start, the Committee will first hear from two individuals who were directly involved with the Drilling Moratorium Report but were either not interviewed or did not provide documents to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) during its investigation into this matter.”*

Neal Kemkar served as Special Assistant to Steve Black (Counselor to the Secretary). During the OIG’s investigation, the lead investigators interviewed Kemkar, who had personally assisted with developing the Drilling Moratorium Report, communicated with the peer reviewers, and transmitted edits with White House staff. However, the investigators did not seek documents directly from Mr. Kemkar.

Mary Katherine Ishee served as Deputy Administrator for Minerals Management Service. The OIG never interviewed her or sought documents from her, despite a recommendation to do so from another witness.

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