

**CHRISTOPHER K. JONES**

**BROTHER OF GORDON LEWIS JONES,  
WHO DIED ABOARD THE *DEEPWATER HORIZON***

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES: “THE OBAMA  
ADMINISTRATION’S DE FACTO MORATORIUM IN  
THE GULF OF MEXICO - COMMUNITY AND  
ECONOMIC IMPACTS”**

**HEARING DATE AND TIME:  
MARCH 16, 2011 - 10:00 A.M.  
LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING-ROOM 1324**

**Testimony Before the House Committee on Natural Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
March 16, 2011**

*The Effect of – A Brother's Statement*

**Christopher K. Jones**

Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey, and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Chris Jones and I am not here to talk about the timing or extent of a moratorium. That is for you to debate and discuss. Instead, I am here to describe the profound impact my brother's death, while working on a rig engaged in deepwater drilling, has had on our family.

My brother is Gordon Jones. He is my only brother. He was tragically killed aboard the Deepwater Horizon while earning his living as a mud engineer for MI SWACO, a contractor for BP. Gordon had nothing to do with this disaster. He was simply doing his job and making his way through his shift so he could get back home to his family. Instead, he never saw his family again. We can thank poor, and likely grossly negligent, decisions by many people and companies for that.

Besides his extended family, Gordon is survived by a wife and two young sons. Stafford will turn three on Monday. Max will have his first birthday on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Gordon's wife, Michelle, was eight months pregnant with Max when she learned she would never see her husband, the father of her two sons, and best friend again. This is a picture of what Gordon left behind.

[Show picture No. 1]

This photograph was taken in the hospital shortly after Max's birth.

In the past year, Michelle has faced some extremely difficult occasions: Gordon and Michelle's anniversary, Max's birth, Gordon's birthday, Thanksgiving and Christmas were all celebrated without Gordon. Truly, it does not feel like it has been a year, it feels more like ten years. I promise you that spending one day in my shoes, or in Michelle's shoes, will give you an entirely different perspective on the topic of worker safety. Just the other day, as I was driving Stafford and one of my sons to my house, Stafford matter of factly told me that his Daddy is in Heaven. It broke my heart.

No one denies that my brother's death, and the death of the other ten men, could and should have been prevented. I understand that accidents happen. But companies engaged in oil exploration should do everything in their power to prevent accidents that have such horrible consequences. In the case of the Deepwater Horizon, they did not.

I am here today because I committed to Michelle, Stafford and Max, and to my family, that I would do anything and everything to support them and try and make sure no one would have to endure this pain again. No one should have to needlessly risk their lives to earn a living. No one should be allowed to risk the lives of hard working men and women under their supervision and care in hopes of doing the job faster or cheaper. Gordon and the others workers killed that day took safety very seriously and trusted their co-workers. Had every company engaged in the operation of that rig taken safety as seriously as they did, there would have been no blowout.

I find it interesting how hard the oil industry is working to get back into the Gulf. BP and others want to put this disaster behind them. Meanwhile, no one with BP has bothered to place a single phone call to anyone in my family. Not once. I don't expect a profuse apology for widowing by brother's wife or killing the father of my nephews. I don't expect them to accept responsibility for Gordon's death, because that would likely be asking too much. All we expected was for someone from BP to call and tell us they were sorry for our loss. Maybe they were too busy hiring public relations firms and producing commercials. Clearly, they were too busy moving forward, trying to

continue drilling and making more money, while we were left to pick up the pieces.

As many of you know, despite our best efforts, we have been unable to get Congress to pass a bill that would allow these families to recover damages against those at fault by changing laws passed almost one hundred years ago. The House of Representatives commendably tried to do that when it passed the SPILL Act last year. The Senate almost passed its own version. However, a single Senator prevented its passage by unanimous consent. I would hope that BP was not responsible for convincing that Senator to block that bill. But I don't know that.

What I definitely know they were not doing over the past year was trying to comfort these families, including mine. At the very least, BP could join our efforts to change the law. A law that would allow this family to move on with their lives. At the very least, BP and others could work with Congress to improve worker safety so this never happens again.

Now, I am from Louisiana and have lived in Louisiana all my life. No one needs to explain to me the importance of the oil industry to my state. While I have very little knowledge about the business, I know it supports the livelihoods of thousands of people in Louisiana and other Gulf states. And I understand the criticism of the moratorium. However, as Gordon's brother and uncle to two little boys who won't even remember their father, I plead with you to consider the repercussions of not ensuring the safety of these workers before allowing BP and others to keep doing business as usual.

Please don't forget the men and women who work on those rigs and the families they leave behind. They need and deserve those jobs. They just shouldn't be forced to choose between providing for their families and working on a rig where safety, not speed, is what is most important. Please remember Gordon, Michelle, Stafford and Max and the families of the other victims. Hopefully, that thought effectively challenges you to encourage and support worker safety reforms that are desperately needed and might have saved my brother's life.

Thank you. I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.