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Opening Statement of
Representative Doc Hastings
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
Thursday, May 27, 2010
Oversight hearing on the
“Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Strategy and
Implications of the Deepwater Horizon Rig Explosion”

I would like to start by first offering my condolences to those who lost friends, family and coworkers in this terrible accident. The loss of eleven hard working men cannot be forgotten in this tragedy and serves as a stark reminder of why we must work to ensure that something like this never happens again.

Yesterday, we heard from Secretary Salazar and other Administration officials as this Committee seeks to unwind the decisions and actions that led up to the explosion and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon and ongoing oil spill.

Today, we will hear from the companies directly responsible for this rig and well. We all hope to learn more about what is being done to stop the leak and clean up the spill.

As I stated yesterday, both BP and the Obama Administration have a joint and shared responsibility to do everything they can to stop the flow of oil.

I want make it abundantly clear that there is not just bipartisan agreement, but a bipartisan demand and commitment, that the responsible parties pay the full cost of the cleanup and all damages caused by this spill.

The American people should not and will not be on the hook for a single dime to pay for this disaster.

I'd like to briefly discuss the President's press conference scheduled for this afternoon.

This morning's news reports are full of stories quoting a top Administration source on the announcements that the President will make at the press conference.

The President is announcing that offshore leases and drilling scheduled for months and years from now are being delayed.

Administration officials say the President's 'eyes have been opened' and that's why he is acting. There may well real merit in taking a pause in some areas but oil has been spilling for over a month.

There are an untold number of gallons of oil floating in the Gulf.

The Governor of Louisiana reports that oil is washing ashore on a hundred miles of beaches in his state.

Federal law explicitly states that the President is responsible for overseeing the cleanup of oil spills in federal waters.

Rather than focusing on things not scheduled to happen for months and years from now,... the President needs to get focused on the actual crisis at hand.

The public expects the President and his Administration to carry out their duty under the law and get focused on stopping this spill and cleaning it up.

The economic toll of this spill is still climbing, but it's important that the actions of the federal government don't impose further economic harm by hastily acting without all the facts.

If decisions are being made that could put people out of work, then there must be solid information justifying these actions and it must be publicly disclosed.

Having seen the impact of \$4 gasoline on our economy and family's pocketbooks, the American people understand the need for more American-made energy.

The American people know that American-made energy means jobs and stronger national security. The leak must be stopped, the oil cleaned up, and then we must get to the bottom of exactly what happened so that informed, educated and permanent reforms can be put in place to ensure American drilling is the safest in the world and that a spill like this never happens again.