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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
House Committee on Natural Resources
Before the Full Committee Oversight Hearing on
"BOEMRE/U.S. Coast Guard Joint Investigation Team Report"
Wednesday, October 12, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.

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JEFFREY DUNCAN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today. Although I was greatly frustrated by the events that led to the delay and repeated rescheduling of this hearing, I'm pleased that today we will hear testimony from the investigation Co-Chairs who conducted and oversaw extensive interviews, depositions and document review. This Committee will also hear from the three companies named in the report.

The primary purpose for originally scheduling this hearing was to hear directly from the actual frontline investigators about their official work and findings. As the Committee responsible for overseeing the agencies and laws responsible for offshore energy production, it's our duty to get the full facts regarding the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill and the findings of this report.

At our very first hearing of the year, this Committee heard testimony from the Co-Chairs of the President Obama's own Commission that he selected and appointed, and it's only logical that we give the same attention to this official report.

I've said from day one that we need all the facts and information regarding this spill before rushing to judge or legislate. This report is an important piece of the puzzle that gives us deeper insight and greater clarity into what caused the explosion that tragically took 11 lives and led to an oil spill that caused widespread impacts throughout the Gulf.

The JIT investigation is unique and important in many ways. While there have been several investigations and reports issued, this is the only investigation team that had subpoena power. This is the only investigation team comprised of technical engineers and experts. And this is the only investigation team that actually examined the blowout preventer.

Members of this investigation team were on the ground from day one and had the necessary tools to complete a thorough and comprehensive investigation. They had access to information that others didn't and it is important for the Committee to hear directly from them on their report and conclusions.

In short, this report finds that the disaster was the direct result of multiple human errors, and technical failures. While the report makes a number of recommendations, it's interesting to note that it includes no specific recommendations for Congressional action.

I've repeatedly stated that the top priority of this Committee is to make U.S. offshore drilling the safest in the world. Over the past 18 months there have been significant changes and reforms to improve offshore drilling and response. It is important that Congress, the Administration and industry continue to respond appropriately.

I've stressed that reforms must be done thoughtfully and be done right. We have no other choice when the stakes are this high. Offshore drilling must be done safely, but we cannot afford to make it impossible through over regulation.

Yesterday, this Committee heard from people and businesses in the Gulf who continue to suffer one year after the Obama Administration lifted the official moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico. Their livelihoods are linked to U.S. energy production, and so is our Nation's.

Our national economy, American jobs and our national security are all dependent on safe and reliable U.S. energy production. We must move forward with offshore energy production in a safe, timely and efficient manner.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and learning more about the months of on-the-ground work from the JIT investigators. America owes both of you and your teams our appreciation for your service to our Nation.