

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of  
Chairman Doc Hastings  
Committee on Natural Resources  
On Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at 2:00 p.m.  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Before the Full Natural Resources Committee  
*Oversight Hearing on: "The National Commission on the BP Oil Spill findings and  
Recommendations"***

It's been nine months since the horrific explosion and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that resulted in the death of 11 men and the burning and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon rig. Since then nearly five million barrels of oil spilled into the Gulf; resulting in the economic displacement of tens of thousands of fishermen, tourism workers, and people connected to the offshore energy industry.

The oil spill was a terrible tragedy and the effects are still being felt today.

As this Committee proceeds with its oversight duties, we must be mindful of how we respond, because that response could significantly impact American energy policy in the future. The response to this event could be the difference between making offshore drilling the safest in the world - or locking-up up our resources, putting more Americans out of work, and further relying on foreign countries for our energy needs.

It is because of these serious implications that I have stressed from day one the need to have all the facts and information surrounding the cause of this incident before there is a rush to judgment, or a rush to legislate.

When President Obama announced that he was personally appointing an Oil Spill Commission, many in Congress and around the country were deeply concerned with both the make-up and mandate of the Commission.

There were concerns that the President's Commission didn't have enough experts in engineering or experience in the oil and gas industry and that it was comprised of individuals who had dedicated a significant portion of their career to opposing oil and gas drilling.

While understanding these concerns, I kept, and am keeping, an open-mind on the recommendations of the President's Commission. This is why it is the first scheduled Committee hearing of this Congress and I'm eager to hear from its co-Chairs.

This report provides further insight into the accident and will be a factor in Congress' discussions. However, even with the Commission's report, we still don't know precisely what caused the explosion, or why the blowout preventer failed to work.

Additional reports from the joint Coast Guard-BOEM Marine Board hearings and the Chemical Safety Board are forthcoming and I'm hopeful they will provide answers to some of the lingering questions.

Through all this uncertainty, what I do know for sure is that America needs American-made energy.

We need to keep and create American jobs.

And we need to mitigate America's dependence on foreign energy that threatens our national security.

The oil spill was a terrible tragedy, but it should not be used as an excuse to further reduce America's access to our energy resources. Some in Congress view this spill as an opportunity to shut down offshore drilling. That is not a solution; that is giving up.

Legislation aimed at this goal was introduced last year and will predictably be proposed again this Congress. This despite the strong support among the American people for continued offshore energy production.

Republicans want to make offshore drilling the safest in the world. We believe in the need to make smart, effective reforms that are centered on improving safety, putting people back to work, and allowing responsible drilling to move forward. The right response to this spill is to focus on making drilling safe, not making it impossible.

The importance of this Committee's future work cannot be understated. Gas prices are steadily rising, Iran has assumed the Presidency of OPEC and rigs are leaving the Gulf for foreign countries – like Cuba, Brazil and Mexico – taking American jobs with them. This isn't speculation, it's happening.

My colleagues from the Gulf can attest to the real economic pain being felt by people and businesses due to this Administration's drilling moratorium.

Production in the Gulf of Mexico has already fallen by more than 200,000 barrels per day, and is predicted by the Energy Information Administration to fall by more than 500,000 barrels per day by 2012.

Every barrel we don't produce from the Gulf means more lost revenue to the federal government, more lost jobs, and an additional transfer of American wealth to hostile nations.

I believe in American ingenuity and I know we can get this right. The answer is to address what went wrong, make smart reforms and allow drilling to resume. The stakes are too high to give up. Our economic competitiveness, American jobs and natural security are on the line.