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Democrats Block Republican Amendment to Ensure Press Has Free, Open Access to Cover Gulf Coast Oil Spill Cleanup

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today, during a Full Committee markup of the CLEAR Act (H.R. 3534), Rep. Paul Broun (GA-10) introduced an amendment to hold the Obama Administration accountable and ensure members of the news media are allowed full and open access to coastal areas in the Gulf of Mexico affected by the Deepwater Horizon spill. Democrats refused to allow a vote on this amendment, raising a point of order that it was not germane to the Committee.

“There have been several accounts of the Obama Administration restricting access and stopping the press from thoroughly reporting on this oil spill,” said Rep. Broun. “The media has a responsibility to not only accurately report the news but to keep everyone associated with the spill accountable. President Obama promised transparency, but we have seen numerous examples where that is not the case. There is no excuse for reporters and photographers to be denied access to public places unless their life is in imminent danger. This amendment is necessary in order to eliminate any confusion and ensure that First Amendment rights truly are protected.”

A variety of news outlets have [reported](#) how the Obama Administration is blocking media access to certain parts of the Gulf region. Earlier this month, the Coast Guard implemented a rule prohibiting members of the media from coming within 65 ft of response vessels or booms on the water or beaches. Yesterday, in response to the widespread criticism, National Incident Commander Thad Allen [lifted](#) the 65 ft media ban for credentialed journalists. Rep. Broun’s amendment would protect the First Amendment rights of journalists and end the Obama Administration’s practice of denying press access to this oil spill.

Amendment text:

“Except in cases of imminent harm to human life, federal officials shall allow free and open access to the media of oil spill clean up activity occurring on public lands or public shorelines, including the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill.”

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