

many more do we want to somehow live with? Live with the damage to our ecosystem, live with the damage to the people that are afflicted by it, the jobs that are lost, the tourism that is lost. They have been with us for over a century, these oil spills, and they will be with us for centuries more unless we break that addiction to oil.

□ 1845

We must replace oil in our energy supply with clean fuel. And it's right here. We have it. We know what it is. You pointed to some of them in that chart. And the stunning figure that I just heard that I would like to share with you tonight, Mr. GARAMENDI, is that, by just retrofitting 75,000 homes in this country, we would save the equivalent of all the oil that has spewed into the gulf by BP. Just retrofitting 75,000 homes.

Now, we have passed in this House legislation, the Home Star bill, which will spur the retrofitting of 3.3 million homes and create over 600,000 jobs. The energy saved from these retrofits, if the Senate passes that measure, would save more than 44 times the wasted energy floating in the gulf and would do so at one-fortieth of the cost.

Mr. GARAMENDI. You know, that's really, really interesting. And if I recall the vote, when that was on the floor, the Republicans voted against that. They didn't vote for one of the most important conservation programs we have that not only would save all that energy, but help each homeowner's utility bill. Go figure.

You mentioned this. We've got to go back here because I've got to answer this question. Please help me with this. Who gets the most subsidies; solar, algae, wave, wind, or oil?

Ms. SPEIER. The answer is?

Mr. GARAMENDI. The answer is oil. If you take a look, 2002 to 2008, where did the subsidies go? Well, the oil industry got over \$70 billion of taxpayer money in direct tax subsidies, \$72 billion. The green renewable energy got \$12.2 billion over that same period of time, 2002 to 2008. And in addition to that, the ethanol industry got \$16.8 billion.

So we really, if we took this money, this subsidy, \$70 billion over a 6-year period and shifted it over to this side, particularly up here to the renewable energy—this is solar, wind, advanced biofuels like algae and the rest—where would we be? Where would that young lady's future be? Renewable energy of all kinds. You shift the subsidies around.

Is that possible? Can we do that? What do you think?

Ms. SPEIER. Of course we can do it. It's all about whether we have the will. We can even allow Big Oil to continue to have some little subsidies, or equalize the subsidies that we are providing there and take that other money, take \$6 billion, retrofit 3.3 million homes in this country, create hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we would be better off.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Duh. Why didn't the Republicans vote for that? It makes eminent sense.

Ms. SPEIER. Well, it's the same reason that they sat in this Chamber a year-and-a-half ago and chanted over and over again, "Drill, baby, drill." It was like a high school football field. And they couldn't say it loud enough or long enough or repeat it often enough.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I wasn't here at that time. I got a special election last November. You are telling me that it was just less than a year ago?

Ms. SPEIER. About 18 months ago.

Mr. GARAMENDI. About 18 months ago they sat here and they said, "Drill, baby, drill"? I heard the same thing tonight. They said, End the moratorium on deepwater drilling. Drill. And I am going, You want another oil spill? Thirty-eight in the last 18 years in the gulf plus this big one. That's not the solution.

The solution lies in moving to a new energy source, the green technologies, the renewable energy, so that it is the sun that gives us the power in the future so that that young lady doesn't have to face the extraordinary impact that climate change will bring. We have to move away from carbon-based fuels.

Would you agree with that?

Ms. SPEIER. Oh, I absolutely agree with that. And I think that we have got to just face some very fundamental facts. If you continue to drill at 18,000 feet, you are asking for trouble.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let's see, that fellow Murphy was right. Everything that can go wrong will go wrong. And BP didn't plan for what could go wrong. In fact, they ignored it. They put together an application that just ignored the possibility of the worst case. In situations like this, we must force the industry to assume the worst case will happen. We have seen it. No more.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for the time. I yield back.

CONGRESS MUST ACT TO DEFEND THE GULF

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRIGHT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this hour. It's going to be an interesting couple of weeks on this issue of this oil spill, because we are going to get two conflicting points of view. I actually heard, I believe, that somehow this oil spill is now George W. Bush's fault. It reminds me of the game, the Kevin Bacon game that your job is no matter what actor or movie you lay out before the public, you have got to bring it back in seven cycles to Kevin Bacon. And it seems that everything that goes on in the United States, that the majority party seems to somehow think whatever goes on in the United

States they can somehow track it back to George W. Bush.

And what I heard was that Mr. Bush had used a drilling rig at some point in his life, and therefore it's Bush's fault that there was a failure, or something to that extent, a failure on this BP drilling rig. It's time to really stop. It's getting a little old for the American public, for them to hear constantly that no matter what goes wrong in the Obama administration it's George W. Bush's fault. I think this is getting a little old and getting a little bit, it seems to be sort of a fantasy that seems to be prevailing.

We have got a great disaster in the gulf, and nobody's denying we have a great disaster in the gulf. Today I heard a man who actually knows something about drilling in the gulf. I haven't heard anyone stand up that has talked on the majority side tonight and said, By the way, I have drilled these, and let me tell you what has happened in the gulf.

But TRENT FRANKS came before us today and showed us what has happened in the gulf—it is very interesting—and why the cap failed that they first started, and why the wells that are being drilled to intersect this well, the relief wells should be successful. And, you know, if you want to know how you do something, you ought to talk to somebody that's actually done it. And TRENT, a Member of this body, has actually done it.

So we will find out, whenever we get this spill stopped, we will find out what happened in the gulf to cause this thing to blow out. And it may be human error. It may be the company's error. It may be shortcuts they took. It may be the inspector's error. It could be just about anybody's error. We don't know.

Now, the truth is we don't have to know yet because the presumption is overwhelming that it's BP's responsibility, and they admit it. It's their responsibility. But blame-gaming is not going to stop the oil from flowing into the gulf. Putting our resources together at every level from every source is part of what you do when you have a national emergency. I don't care whether that national emergency has the name Katrina or Rita or Ike or any of the other names, or Carla or any of the other names of hurricanes that have swept across our gulf and attacked all Gulf States at some point in time, or it has the name—what's the name of this well? I can't even remember anymore. Anyway, just call it the BP well in the Gulf of Mexico that blew out. Blame game's not solving the problem.

What's the problem? When it's the hurricane, the wind's blowing and things are getting torn down, and we need to put our resources together to help the people and the industries that are attacked by that hurricane. Today we have animals, we have sea life, we have wildlife, sea life, human life that is threatened by this BP oil spill.

And our first job, and the job not only of British Petroleum but of those of us who have the responsibility of protecting this country, which would be the President of the United States, the executive department, this Congress, and everybody involved, should have immediately poured massive, massive support into doing something about this oil well and stopping this spill. And we should have done it through the people who have the intelligence and the technology to tell us just exactly what we are dealing with.

I wouldn't recommend you call a great white hunter in Africa to tell him how to put down this oil spill. I wouldn't recommend that you call a surgeon in Brooklyn, New York, and ask him to put down this oil spill. And I wouldn't recommend you talk to a community organizer and ask him how to put down this oil spill. I would recommend that you immediately, when this happened, approach those people who have the expertise to deal with this oil spill and do it. And quite honestly, I think we have to say that the President of the United States told us the buck stops with him, so he's the person who should have started this ball rolling when this whole thing started coming down on us.

I have got a little chart up here, the gulf spill timeline. And we are going to look at that for just a minute to see how well we did in deciding that we were, as a government, going to join the oil and gas industry in coming up with a solution to British Petroleum's disaster that they had created in our blessed Gulf of Mexico. In fact, I think I have the State with the largest amount of Gulf of Mexico coastline of any State in this Union. And it would be close, Florida would be a close second. And they may have more. I don't know. But certainly the State of Texas has a lot. So let's look at this thing for just a second.

April 20, 2010, and today is June 16. So looking back to April 20, the explosion occurred. Eleven people were killed. Right there we knew we had a problem. The first oil leak was officially recognized and revealed by the administration in Washington on April 24. So 4 days later, the administration acknowledged and revealed to us that there was an oil leak.

On April 28, the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Salazar, traveled down to the BP command center in Houston. April 29, the Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano announced a spill of national significance, and President Obama made his first public remarks about the disaster. That's 9 days after it occurred. April 30, the President deployed his senior administration officials to the gulf region and makes a request for remarks about what's going on, and the Louisiana National Guard was activated to assist. That's a start. That's a first start.

The President visits the gulf on May 2. It looks like 13 days after the event. Cabinet officers briefed the Members of

Congress on May 4 about the seriousness of this event.

□ 1900

May 11, Louisiana requests emergency permission from the Federal Government to dredge barriers to construct berms. Now, when I was about 18 years old, I worked in south Louisiana, and the whole ecology and economy of Louisiana is directly affected by what they call the marshlands. There are literally thousands of people who make their living because the marshlands in Louisiana thrive to be breeding grounds and producing grounds for numerous amounts of seafood products. And in fact, I would venture to say that there's not anybody who eats seafood in the United States, and have done so for any length of time at all in their life, has eaten seafood that was produced as a result of the overall environment of the Louisiana coastal region, which is 99 percent marsh.

Now, marsh is different from the beach. The beach is bad. If you've got a beautiful beach like they had at Pensacola, that gorgeous white sand, or anywhere in Alabama or Mississippi or anywhere in Florida, tar balls on the beach and this nasty sludge coming into the beach is going to be icky and yucky and nasty. And if you get it all over your feet, you have to clean it off with alcohol, and it can burn you and tear you up.

But if that stuff comes into the marsh, it can kill and will kill plant life, animal life, and ocean life.

So when the Governor of Louisiana, who was so unfairly criticized here tonight by the opposition, when the Governor said, look, guys, at least authorize some dredging to put some sand barriers between us, between our marsh and that terrible spill that's headed our direction, and yet it wasn't until the 27th of May that the Federal Government granted Louisiana a partial permission to dredge sand up to build sort of an island-like barrier so maybe that oil will hit the sand and not come in where all the plants and the wildlife and the sea life lives and thrives and functions.

But that was only 27 days too late, and the 28th of May, the President went down on a second visit to the Gulf States, and this is what he told us: The buck stops with me.

I agree with him. The buck stops with the President of the United States, and now we are hearing people scream about a national disaster, which it is, and the President of the United States' job was to lead, and lead means go out and if you have to, roll up your sleeves and suck oil out of the water. You certainly need to get people out there that are taking it seriously enough to follow the instructions of the man on the ground, Governor Jindal, who said it's not a solution, but it sure would help if there's a barrier between us and that oil. And he shouldn't have had to wait for the Federal Government to hem and haw and

say, well, we don't know what that sand island you're going to build is going to do to the overall environment of south Louisiana. What does it matter? The oil is going to come in there and wreck it. So let's just dig up the sand. No, we had to wait.

On the 29th of May, British Petroleum did its top-kill plan to try to stop the oil, and it failed. The 2nd of June, the Obama administration finally approved Louisiana's plan to dredge and tells BP to pay \$360 million for five new berms. The Justice Department announced a criminal investigation into the explosion and the spill. Let's see, that's all of May and 11 days in April when nothing of significance took place.

June 14, the Senate Democrats write BP calling on the company to set up a \$20 billion independent administrative escrow fund to compensate victims of the spill.

June 15, that was yesterday, President Obama makes the Oval Office speech on the oil spill and uses the crisis to push climate change legislation.

And if you heard what our colleagues were talking about in the previous 1 hour before this Congress, they were talking about that we need to have these alternative fuels to replace oil and replace petroleum products, in fact, all carbon products, coal, oil, natural gas. They talked to you about subsidies and other things, but they show you on their chart, and you see this one right here, it is algae, and next year we're going to replace all the energy produced by oil with algae if you will put the resources in algae. No, because it won't.

If you say, look at these wind farms, this is going to replace all the energy we needed to charge our electric cars so we don't even have to run on any kind of petroleum product. And that's all we need is to subsidize that and pour money into it, and it will replace it in the next 2 years. So why am I using the term the next 2 years? Because the President of the United States has put a moratorium on drilling in the gulf, and 17 percent of our consumption on oil and oil products, which includes plastic and other by-products of oil and natural gas, 17 percent of that a year comes from deep-water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. So, in 2 years, that's 34 percent of our fuel consumption nationwide that's going to have to be accounted for by somebody in some alternative form if we're going to give up on oil and gas.

Are any of the alternatives that are even close to replacing 34 percent of our energy consumption in this country? No. Will there be? Maybe. But the reality is, we get up in the morning, and we start our cars, and we drive to work. And generally we're burning gasoline or diesel, all of which are products of the petroleum industry. And if you're not going to use gas or diesel, then you better hook a sail up to your car and hope the wind is blowing towards work or you're not going to work.

So the reality is, to just cave in on an industry because of a terrible disaster is like saying, oh, my God, a 747 went down with 600 passengers, shut down the air industry for the next 6 months. But here's the reality: The reality is this 6-month shutdown of the Gulf is actually going to be a 5-year shutdown of the Gulf because once they pull those rigs out of the Gulf, we're not going to get them back it's estimated for 3 to 5 years. So the 6-month moratorium in effect shuts down 17 percent of our energy production in this country for 5 years, potentially for 5 years.

It is time to be realistic and say, what's the big problem right now? And it's the oil spill. Why is it a problem? Because oil is floating around on our pristine Gulf of Mexico. It is moving from State to State. It is eventually going to come ashore in someplace, and why aren't we doing everything we can to bring people over here from anywhere that will help and say we'll help?

I'm going to add one more thing. On June 16, President Obama met with BP executives in the White House—that's today—and he got his \$20 billion to go into escrow. But the reality is where have we been, where has our leadership been of this country, the President of the United States and the administration, when this oil was spilling out of that well? Why didn't we answer the phone when the Dutch said 3 days after the spill started, we've got a fleet of skimmers that will come over to help you skim oil? Why didn't we respond? In fact, why didn't we say, world, we help you every chance you ask us to help you, give us a hand; anybody who's got resources that can soak up oil, please bring them to the United States and help us out?

That kind of leadership had to come from the President of the United States, and the waiving of the antique act called the Jones Act had to be done by the President of the United States.

So as we talk about this disaster, let's start by saying what's our real problem? And our real problem is this leaking oil, and we've got to clean it up. Before anything else, we've got to clean it up, but instead, we act to attack the drilling industry and shut down 17 percent of our energy resources a year at a minimum because it's very, very good and popular to attack the oil industry. But in reality, tomorrow morning, when you crank up your engine, say to yourself, what kind of fuel is driving me to work today and where does it come from?

I am very pleased to see that I'm joined by two of my colleagues, and I'm going to call on Mr. MICA from Florida to talk about this very, very disastrous situation and a bill that he has that offers some solutions.

Mr. MICA. Thank you so much. We affectionately refer to the gentleman from Texas as Judge CARTER, but a distinguished Member of Congress, a part of the leadership of the Republican team, and thank you also for coming

tonight before the Congress and the American people, House of Representatives, to review probably what is one of the worst ecological disasters, natural disasters our country has ever experienced, and actually to come here and to review some of the timeline of what has taken place. You've touched on a number of important issues.

First of all, as someone who comes from the State of Florida—we're part of the Gulf Coast—I have to extend our deepest, heartfelt sympathies to those that lost lives, both on the rig, and now we heard today from some of our colleagues, in an extensive review that we participated in on our side of the aisle, from some of those from the adjoining States, how their economy is suffering and how the proposed moratorium that's being arbitrarily imposed may make this disaster even worse. It's hard to imagine it being worse, but again, we empathize with those who have lost lives, who have been injured, and now have seen their livelihood dramatically impaired by this natural disaster.

What we've got to do, though, is we've got to step back. We've got to look at what took place, and then we've got to look at some remedial action. Judge CARTER, gentleman from Texas, raised some excellent points. This is now 60 days, almost two full months, into this disaster that took place on April 20. We have not had the proper response. That's evident.

The gentleman talked about the need to bring skimmers and other craft in. He spoke about waiving the Jones Act, which President Bush did I think in 4 days afterwards. We haven't really called for a waiving of the Jones Act, but we would support it. It probably should have been done. There have been offers of foreign vessels.

I was absolutely dumbfounded; on Saturday, I received an urgent e-mail from those who are involved with American-flagged vessels, one of the leading maritime ship owners, domestically flagged, U.S. flag, who contacted me on Saturday. The message just floored me. Mr. MICA, our industry, American flag industry, doesn't mind waiving the Jones Act. The Jones Act does protect American jobs and American labor. Again it's great to have those flagged vessels. Waiving it is done on rare occasions and in emergencies, as President Bush did.

□ 1915

I was informed that we have flagged Jones Act-compliant vessels, American flag vessels waiting—this particular company, one of the largest maritime companies in the United States, American flag, has been waiting for a call. They've been waiting for a call from the Department of Homeland Security, from the Coast Guard, any Federal agency, or BP, to come in and provide—they have vessels that can help and could be helping in the cleanup even before we exempted vessels, foreign vessels to come in on this, and

we've had an offer of that for some time. So I was shocked.

I sent to Secretary Napolitano yesterday a letter and I outlined the information I got. I lead the Transportation Committee in the House on the Republican side, but I said, Madam Secretary, this is unbelievable that no one has even availed themselves of the American flag vessels who are ready, who have equipment. We should not be endangered in Florida or in other States in having that oil up on our shores. We have the capability that has not even been utilized to date. So this was my letter, my plea to the Secretary, and I'm shocked and disappointed.

The other thing, too, is there seems to be a conflict. Last night, we heard the President say that we have been in charge, he's in charge as the Commander in Chief. Under the Oil Spill Recovery Act that we passed in 1990 after Exxon Valdez, it's pretty clear the chain of command, but Thad Allen, who is in charge of this, former Coast Guard commandant now in charge of the spill cleanup, he said, but we do not have the capability, the United States Government does not have the capability—he said that over and over again, that the private sector has this capability. Here again we have U.S. flag vessels that can do the cleanup haven't gotten a call, still waiting. The Jones Act they could have waived and allowed those who volunteered assistance with skimmers and other equipment, that has not come in.

So while there are folks in this administration who say they're in charge, there is some disconnect here in getting the equipment, getting the resources out there. In fact, the private sector has been in charge, and this is the first time the President has met with these folks. I was dumbfounded, too, today—and I think Judge CARTER was in that meeting and other Members on our side of the aisle—when we heard the gulf coast delegation say they have requested but not yet met with the President of the United States. It's hard to believe the President would not meet with the elected Representatives of the gulf coast States to sit down.

And then time and again we heard in the review that took place today of requests, simple requests for berms to stop the oil coming into the marshes, simple requests to act now, sooner rather than later. And we've seen the results of now that oil is making its way towards the Florida shores and doing even more damage. So if in fact the President is in charge, we need to free these vessels, employ every means possible to keep this disaster from going further.

One other thing I disagree with the President on. I know it's important to act, and he did act in imposing a moratorium, but I think what they've got to do—and I believe he revised that moratorium to not affect the 3,500 shallow water drilling sites, but it is closing

down the deepwater drilling sites. Some of those are exploration sites. In fact, they probably should be closed until we have assurances that future deepwater drilling can be done. My point here is that by closing all of them down with a blanket moratorium, we are putting more people out of work, taking a horrible situation and making it worse. We will have even more people unemployed.

So I think the logical, reasonable approach would be to send inspectors in, hire, retain whatever we need, or if they have government officials to go in and see that the deepwater drilling that is taking place where they actually have the well in production—which I think is about half of the approximately 30 deepwater wells that are out there. We don't want to make the situation worse economically for those that have lost their job, seeing their business close down or, again, see thousands of people put out of work by the wrong approach.

So a reasonable approach. First, we get every piece of equipment, whether it's U.S. or foreign flag, there. This can be cleaned up. This is a doable job with U.S. vessels that have been waiting to hear that call from the administration. And then secondly, let's also be reasonable in the moratorium. I have been a strong advocate of keeping the U.S. independent and free as much as we could, drill where it's safe. My State of Florida I helped on a 100-mile setoff years and years ago. I thought that was reasonable. But you know, it may or may not make a difference because this was only 45 miles off the coast of Louisiana, as we see.

The other thing we need to do is have a good backup system. We shouldn't be rubber-stamping approvals of any company, whether it's BP or anyone else. BP, in February of 2009, gave this—and this is a copy of it—this is the plan for their exploring that site and their doing an exploration well, a development well. This plan was submitted in March of 2009, over a year ago, and this is the one-page approval. I got a copy of this before our Transportation Committee hearing just before it took place. This is the one-page, carte blanche approval. I don't think some of the people in the Minerals Management Service even read this 59-page request. And we've heard hearings lately as to the failures of BP to outline a good, solid proposal.

This proposal is the basic plan for drilling that BP submitted. It also refers to a much bigger document, and that's the actual 500-plus-page document that details all of the spill cleanup procedures that BP would employ. That was also rubber-stamped with this approval, this one-page approval. So this was done by the Obama administration with people sleeping at the switch or not paying attention.

What's shocking, and I heard former Governor Palin telling the country this—and people should listen to Governor Palin on this—Sarah Palin, when

she was the Governor, she was tough on the oil companies. No one passed anything by her. She cracked down on them, made sure they towed the line. And what was interesting is Governor Palin told what they did is, she said this never would have happened, this kind of approval, in her State because there would have been more scrutiny.

The plan that BP offered, in addition to this 59 pages of the 500 cleanup plan, it looks like BP merely mirrored the Alaska plan; in fact, it told how they were going to deal with cleaning up walruses, seals and polar bears, none of which I've seen in the Gulf of Mexico. So, again, the Minerals Management Service was asleep at the switch.

What's finally startling is two things: one, I had our Transportation Infrastructure Committee get a copy of the President's budget. This is the Obama budget—not doctored or anything. I have the exact pages and cover copy of the budget. And in February of this year, before this oil spill, the President submitted a budget to our T&I Committee, Transportation and Infrastructure, that oversees the Coast Guard to slash the Coast Guard, our first responders, by 1,100 positions. In addition, he wanted to decommission and take out of service ships, helicopters, aircraft, all which are necessary for our first responders.

I remember when FRANK LOBIONDO, who is my ranking member on the Coast Guard Committee within our Transportation Committee, when we heard about this, we sent out this press release—this was in February, after the President had recommended cutting our first responders. We said—well, we said it's outrageous, but we said this is a recipe for disaster. This is dated February 25, after we got this. Then startling in this also, if you look a little bit further in the budget—not under our purview, but our staff found this—that the Minerals Management Service that the President talked about last night and how we need to clean that up and everything, in his budget that he proposed to Congress, he proposed slashing the Environmental Review Agency within that, or activities within that, agency by \$2 million; pretty dramatic cut for someone who has to review, again, what the private sector submits, their plan, slashing that plan. I thought this was just unbelievable.

And finally—this is in February. In March, the President came out—and this is the story in *The New York Times*—and said that we have to increase drilling in the gulf. This is it. I didn't make it up. It's *The New York Times*: "Obama to open offshore areas to oil drilling"—and it says right here, the gulf. So first he's slashing first responders, then he's next proposing slashing the agency that does the environmental reviews. The review, again, the oil companies present that to the Minerals Management Service, they review it—I showed you the rubber stamp, April 6, that they approved it.

And then finally, again, the main thing now is cleaning this mess up.

And we've got to employ everyone we can, every piece of equipment, be it domestic or foreign, keep that from coming in.

This is a doable job. When Governors ask to take steps, the solution doesn't need to be caught up for weeks in approvals from agencies. It shouldn't be why we can't do something. It should be, how can we get this accomplished? We've got people around the coast whose livelihood now depends on this. We can't let this disaster that's already done great damage to our economy—we have incredible loss of life that we've seen, and, again, we empathize with those who have lost loved ones in this tragedy, but we can't make a horrible tragedy even worse. So reasonableness on this approach.

I thank Judge CARTER, my colleague, the gentleman from Texas. I see we also have another outstanding member of our Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Mr. OLSON, also a gentleman from Texas. I thank you for coming out tonight, sharing with the Congress, the House of Representatives and our colleagues, some of the facts and information that need to get out to the public so that we can get this mess behind us. Thank you so much, and I yield back.

□ 1930

Mr. CARTER. Before you yield back, would you tell us a little bit about your Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund Improvement Act that you have proposed.

Mr. MICA. Well, I will tell you right now that we are open to suggestions. We are looking at trying to be reasonable in whatever we do. To just impose unlimited caps on liability could be a very serious and damaging measure.

First of all, let me say I believe that BP must be held accountable, fully accountable. Certainly, that company has the resources. They must be responsible for the cleanup. Even though there is a limit under the current 1990 statute of \$75 million, they must be held accountable, far beyond that, for economic damages.

What we don't want to see is that we make the terms for liability so high that only a few multinational corporations will ever be in the oil business. Small producers in Texas and throughout the gulf—there are thousands of people in business—do a good job day in and day out. 3,500 of 3,600, I believe, active rigs in the gulf are in shallow water, but they shouldn't be penalized by the failure of government or by the failure of a big corporation. Let's hold their feet to the fire.

So we are going to work with the Democrats. We are going to work with the administration. We are going to try to craft something that is fair and reasonable, that holds people accountable and that holds their feet to the fire.

The current fund that we have shouldn't be just a slush fund or front financing of the cleanup for BP or for any big company. That was actually set up for orphan spills or for a company that may not have the assets but

that was responsible for a spill. We want that fund to continue to work, and we may need to put more funds in it to make certain that we have coverage for the future. Again, what we don't want to do is put in place insurance and liability limits that are so high that very few people can meet those requirements.

So we are crafting that legislation. We want to do it in a bipartisan manner. The law does need to be altered. We should learn, and we should benefit by this horrible experience, and we should make it better and make certain that it doesn't happen again.

Again, thank you for your leadership and for asking me to participate tonight.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for what he has had to say.

I want to tell you that my wife is Dutch, so I took a little offense at the fact that we had an offer of help of a fleet of skimmers from the Dutch. It is my understanding we gave no response. Maybe that's different. I don't know. All I know is that I'm like Will Rogers. All I know is what I read in the newspapers. Now I'm even more upset since I've found out we have American-flagged ships waiting in the harbor ready to help, and nobody has asked for their help. The leadership that runs this country, the executive branch of the government, ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. MICA. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CARTER. I yield back.

Mr. MICA. In conclusion, I do want to say that I work very closely with Mr. OBERSTAR, the Democrat chair of the T&I Committee. When we found out that the \$1.6 billion fund has a \$150 million cap for emergency use, we came together last week. I offered legislation specifically to deal with that. Again, we have to act in a responsible manner for the country. We passed that. The House concurred with us. We have provided some temporary relief.

Again, I'm not going to let the \$1.6 billion or the \$150 million be a piggy bank for BP or for any responsible parties, but we want to make certain that all of the resources are there on an emergency basis to the administration, to the Coast Guard, to whomever, so no one can say that Congress didn't act in a timely fashion. We were alerted that some of the funds were running low in that emergency portion of the \$1.6 billion, which is put out in advance.

So I talked a little bit before about the legislation we are looking at on liability caps, and that is what we have done in a bipartisan fashion today. We did that, and we are prepared to do even more on the caps, whatever it takes and whatever resources and assets of the government and of the private sector we can bring to bear to bring this horrible disaster under control.

Thank you again for your leadership, both of our Texas Members—Mr. CARTER and Mr. OLSON.

Mr. CARTER. In reclaiming my time, let me say right off that I am very,

very proud to be part of a Congress that instantly reacts to a crisis situation. Mr. OBERSTAR should be commended for that reaction. That is what we are asking for the entire government to do. Let's react positively. Let's work as a team. Let's quit blaming previous administrations. Let's do the job to clean this mess up.

I thank you very much.

My good friend from Texas lives in the heart of All Country USA. Houston, Texas, is, to my way of thinking, the center of the universe for the oil industry, and my good friend PETE OLSON is one of the members of our Houston delegation who is very knowledgeable in this area. He has some legislation, and there may be other things that he wishes to talk about, so I yield to my friend PETE OLSON, the Member from Sugar Land and all points south, to talk to us about how he feels about what is going on today.

Mr. OLSON. Well, thank you for hosting this Special Order tonight on such a critically important issue for the American people.

I would like to thank my colleague from Florida for coming by and for giving his perspectives on how this disaster is affecting Florida.

I'm going to have a theme tonight, Judge. I was in the Navy for 10 years—a naval officer. We're trained to lead. I mean, in my aircraft, I was a crew of 12—five officers, seven enlisted folks. I was the patrol plane commander, so those 11 individuals depended upon me to take them out, to do the mission, and to come back home safely. To sum it up in two words, the philosophy is "leaders lead." Well, guess what? We are not seeing leadership out of Washington.

We've had a very difficult situation. We've had the largest oil spill in American history, and there are thousands of jobs affected by it already: the food processing industry; the fishing industry across the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama; the tourist industry. We're hitting the summer season. This is when people go on vacations. We're past Memorial Day. From what I hear, the hotels are about half full. It has had a significant impact on the people of the gulf coast.

Yet what does the administration do? Do they lead? No. Again, in a knee-jerk reaction to this terrible tragedy, they imposed a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling—all of it stopped. Again, it's a disaster for our economy and for our Nation. Let me go over some of the specifics with you as I know my good friend knows.

There are 150,000 jobs that are going to be lost because of this moratorium. That's 1½ times my hometown of Sugar Land, which the judge mentioned. That's like wiping out Sugar Land and going down to Rosenberg or Richmond and taking them off the map. This is 150,000 jobs.

There are 33 rigs currently out there. I've talked to a constituent in my district who has an ownership interest in two of those rigs.

I asked him last week, How long can you hang out?

He said, Three weeks max.

How much is it costing you?

Well, the rigs are a little different. One's down around \$500,000 a day. The other one is at \$1 million a day. \$1 million.

If this baby goes on, if this moratorium goes on for 6 months, that is going to be \$180 million that that company is going to just have to absorb. Yet you know what they're going to do. Guess what? They're going. They're going overseas. He has been talked to. My constituent has been talked to, and he has had interest from Australia, from Brazil, from western Africa, and from eastern Africa already. He is considering their options very seriously because he can't afford to be paying \$500,000 or \$1 million per day as long as this moratorium goes on. This is going to have a devastating effect on our domestic production of energy.

One of the great problems we have in America—and it is something we should have fixed years ago—is our dependence on foreign oil. We all remember 1979 when the Shah fell, when Iran was taken over by the Ayatollah Khomeini and when the Arab world cut off our fuel supply. I was a 16-year-old in Houston, Texas, and I had just gotten my driver's license. So my job was to take the car up when it got down to about a quarter of a tank of gas. I'd take it up and get in that gas line depending on what the last number of my license plate was—odd or even on an odd or even day—and I loved it. I was standing there with my radio and with my window rolled down. Now that I'm an adult, I realize what a disaster that was. It's not gone. I mean it's still out there today.

As the judge knows, we've got serious challenges in the Middle East. I mean Mr. Ahmadinejad in Iran is scary. I mean he is trying to get a nuclear weapon. He was here in our country a couple of weeks ago at the United Nations. He sat down with George Stephanopoulos and literally—this is the leader of Iran—told him that Osama bin Laden is here in Washington, D.C. Let me say that again. Judge, I think Osama bin Laden is here in Washington, D.C. This guy is trying to get some nuclear weapons. He certainly has some oil, and he has friends out there—the Saudis and others—who would cut him off if something happens.

What has happened, as you know, too, Judge, just as well, is that this administration has hurt our relationship with our great ally Israel. In 18 months, our relationship with Israel has gone from being one of our strongest allies to someone the world looks at and asks, Is the United States really with them? That has created another dangerous situation where countries out there are going to start taking chances and taking shots at our best friend. Again, what happens at the end of the day if we stand up for Israel?

Maybe we get another oil embargo. We can't afford that. Yet this administration's actions by imposing this 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling in the gulf are going to help that cause.

I don't know where to start sometimes. As my colleagues have mentioned, we introduced a bill yesterday, a very simple bill. It's one page—half a page. It basically says, Let's end the moratorium, Mr. President. We had a meeting today with Mr. Salazar. The Secretary of the Interior came over today.

I asked him, Do you believe that you were given all of the accurate analysis on the economic impact of this moratorium on deepwater drilling? Did you know all of the facts? Did you know that 150,000 Americans are going to lose their jobs and that those rigs in the gulf are most likely going to go overseas and start developing oil in foreign nations? They're not coming back any time soon.

It's a minimum—a minimum from what I've heard from the people in my district—of 5 years before those rigs will even consider coming back because they will have paid all that money to go over there. They're going to sit there. They're going to make money. They're going to decrease our national reserves here in America, and they're going to increase our dependence on foreign oil.

Again, Judge, leaders lead. What has the administration done?

Well, you know, as you talked about earlier, Governor Jindal asked for some sand, for about 24 miles of sand to place in between some of the marshlands that were going to be impacted by the oil spill. It took our government 3 weeks to approve that.

Why? Why? he asked.

Well, we had to do some studies. You know, the Environmental Protection Agency had to look and make sure that, if we put that sand in front of the berms, we weren't going to do some things to hurt the birds and the wildlife behind that.

You're going to hurt the wildlife behind that, and you're going to damage those birds when that oil gets in there. Put the sand up. Prevent that from happening. Let's deal with that problem. Amazing.

The Jones Act. You talked about that. We've got great allies out there who want to help us, who have come to us and who have said, Please, we can help you. What did we do? No thanks. We've got this law that requires American unions, our unions, to man the ships. We don't need your help.

Katrina, 2005. President Bush was asked, you know, to waive the Jones Act. He stepped up and did it. Why? Because it was right for America. He was focused on the problem, which was help Louisiana and New Orleans recover from that hurricane.

The problem here is real simple, Judge. We've got oil spewing out of a hole in the Gulf of Mexico. We need to

focus on that. That's the problem, and the administration is not focused on that. Again, leaders lead.

What do we see out of the White House today? Coerced British Petroleum to a \$20 billion slush fund, a privately funded slush fund for government to use and spend as they see fit. Now, BP has made some mistakes, and the investigation is not complete, but there is a lot of evidence and indication that they have made some mistakes, have cut some corners and have done things that haven't been consistent with standard operating procedure.

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And they should agree to reimburse the Americans who have been affected by that.

But for the government to force upon them a \$20 million concession that the government's going to handle and dole out as they see fit is just not what's in our country's interest. We see what this administration has done if we give them large amounts of money. The first big vote I had as a Member of Congress, almost \$900 billion in economic stimulus package. Guess what? Has it stimulated the economy like the administration, like the President, said it would? Has it kept our job rate below 8 percent; our unemployment rate? No. We're hovering about 10 percent. What do we spend it on? You know the answer to that, Judge. Two-thirds of the money has been spent on public sector jobs and one-third on private sector jobs. I'd submit—and this isn't taking much of a chance—that's not how you grow an economy. And yet the administration has now coerced British Petroleum to give them \$20 billion as they see fit.

Finally, and I've got the President's speech here, about the last third of it didn't have anything to do with the Gulf of Mexico. It had something to do with a much bigger agenda. He was talking about why this substantiated and justified the administration's pursuit of a hydrocarbon emission law—a cap-and-tax, as we call it up here in the House. I mean, again, why are we talking about this when we've got oil spilling out of the Gulf right now. And the answer is: because the administration has an agenda that doesn't have anything to do with the oil coming out. It has everything to do with changing America, making us uncompetitive in a global market, increasing our costs of energy for every American consumer, and getting a big tax increase with all these payments, allotments that the corporations, companies, small businesses across America have to pay. And it's quite frustrating.

I mean, when I go back home, Judge, and I am sure you get this, What's going on in D.C.? And, Who's leading? An the answer is, Nobody is leading right now. Again, leaders lead. And that's why I introduced that law that you mentioned earlier to just repeal the moratorium. Get the American people back working on those wells.

The President, as you recall, met this past week with the families, the families of the 11 rig workers that were killed in the explosion. Many of them, from the press reports, told him, Please, Mr. President, don't do this moratorium. Don't do this to my husband, who most of these people were born and raised in small towns in Louisiana, like Homer, and they planned on living their lives there, raising their children there, raising grandchildren there. And they see what's at stake here. They don't want a moratorium, even though their family members have made the ultimate sacrifice.

It's my hope that the administration listens to the American people, looks at the numbers of 150,000 jobs that are going to be lost. Just the fact that we're going to lose all of our—most of our domestic offshore production of oil, and we're going to take that overseas to foreign nations. And one other thing is the second largest income tax source for the Federal Government is offshore drilling. About \$6 billion a year, bye-bye. It's just incredibly frustrating as a freshman Member of Congress that we're going through this, Judge. We need to fight to make sure that this moratorium is repealed, because it's in America's best interest.

Mr. CARTER. Reclaiming my time for a moment, I asked TRENT FRANK, who is an experienced offshore driller, as we all know. I said, TRENT, what kind of salaries do these guys make? He said, The ordinary laborer—which in my day, at least, we used to call those guys roughnecks or roustabouts—\$60 an hour. And the high-tech guys, the guys that can drive a drill bit down 5,000 feet under the water and another multithousands of feet and hit a 12-inch hole where this oil is coming out of, with that kind of skill, they're paid a lot more.

Now the question I would have for the administration, if you take the drilling away and all those people are looking for a job to replace that income, where is the guy who developed his skills through experience at the low-paying job on a well? So maybe he's got a high school education, and he learned his job on the job. Where is he going to find \$60 an hour to support his family on? It doesn't exist.

Mr. OLSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CARTER. I yield.

Mr. OLSON. Judge, I think the President gave us the answer to your question there. In his speech yesterday, this is what he said. "Already, I have issued a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling. I know this creates difficulty for the people who work on these rigs, but for the sake of safety and for the sake of the entire region, we need to know the facts before we allow deepwater drilling to continue."

Mr. CARTER. Reclaiming my time, in wrapping this up, there's a lot of things that the Republicans—we get accused of an awful lot of things around here. We're going to ignore

those accusations. Mr. BLUNT has a bill. The Oil Spill Response and Assistance Act, by Mr. ROY BLUNT from Missouri, H.R. 5336, requires the Secretary of Energy to develop and deploy technology for the use in the event of breach or explosion at or at a significant discharge of oil from a deepwater port, offshore facility, or tank vessel, including caps, fireproof booms, remote-operated submersibles, 24-hour response time, double liability limits for oil companies.

Mr. BLUNT is addressing the issue. Mr. SCHOCK has an Offshore Safety and Response. We have legislation. Let's do our job. And let's continue. Let's end that moratorium and continue to drill. And be safe.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE OIL SPILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up on what my friends were discussing because this oil spill is so important. And when our colleagues across the aisle control the White House, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the most we can do is use this honored place here to bring out some points so that, hopefully, America will respond, let their Members of Congress know what can be done, what should be done, and why. And then perhaps we will get the appropriate action from the majority.

But I know there have been a lot of people that have been perplexed over the President waiting for so long to sit down with the chairman of British Petroleum. I know our President has said he has been involved and been in control and been in charge since day one. We have heard that over and over. And I know my colleague, former Judge CARTER, like me—maybe it's the judge in us—but even though the President has said he wasn't going to believe—something like he wasn't going to be able to believe whatever he said, so he didn't even meet with him. Well, as my fellow former judge knows, the best way to find out if you can believe them is bring them. Look them in the eye. Ask them questions. Find out if their answers are credible. Find out by the questions you ask whether they make sense, whether they're conflicting. And you find out whether you can trust somebody just by getting them in and talking to them. To make the statement that, for whatever reason, but if it was you can't trust what he says, then get him in and talk to him, for heaven's sake. I guess if you're used to condemning police officers before you know the facts, then, as we know from court cases, the best indication of future activity is often past history. It needs to rise to the level of being habit. But we're beginning to see a pattern developed here.

But many have wondered, Why was the President easy on British Petroleum for so long? Lately, he talked about kicking rear ends and all this stuff, but this is over a month and a half later. So I was very interested in this article, apparently from the Washington Examiner. And the K Street Column appears on Wednesday by Timothy Carney. I'm just going to read the article because I found this very interesting and helped give me some insight into this relationship with British Petroleum.

But the article says, "As British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon oil rig was sinking on April 22, Senator John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, was on the phone with allies in his push for climate legislation, telling them he would soon roll out the Senate climate bill with the support of the utility industry and three oil companies, including BP, according to the Washington Post."

Let me explain here why this is called climate legislation. In the last couple of years, it became clear that there was significant evidence to indicate that global warming was not occurring. We've had indication one of the heads of the movement that is claiming it was, actually admits there has been no evidence that the planet has been warming since 1995. And the evidence has been the last few years it is probably cooling. I read an article in the wee hours this morning that South Africa is getting the first snow in decades.

So, anyway, but apparently, the global warming movement realized this was a problem. And I read another article sometime back around this time that indicated, you know what? We've been saying carbon dioxide trapped the warmth in, but it may be, since the planet may be cooling, maybe it makes the Sun's rays bounce off the carbon dioxide. And so maybe CO₂ is to blame for the cooling. So they realize if the planet is cooling, and you want to blame CO₂, you're going to have to change the name, because global warming doesn't work if the climate is actually getting cooler. So they have started calling it climate legislation rather than global warming legislation. So that's why it's referred to this way, and that's why senators like Senator KERRY down the hall are referring to it as climate legislation.

But, anyway, going back to the article, it says, "Kerry never got to have his photo op with BP Chief Executive Tony Hayward and other regulation-friendly corporate chieftains. Within days, Republican cosponsor Lindsey Graham, Republican from South Carolina, repudiated the bill following a spat about immigration, and Democrats went back to the drawing board. But the Kerry-British Petroleum alliance for an energy bill that included a cap-and-trade scheme for greenhouse gasses pokes a hole in a favorite claim of President Obama and his allies in the media that BP's lobbyists have

fought fiercely to be left alone. Lobbying records show that BP is no free-market crusader but instead a close friend of Big Government whenever it serves the company's bottom line. While BP has resisted some government intervention, it has lobbied for tax hikes, greenhouse gas restraints, the stimulus bill, the Wall Street bailout, the subsidies for oil pipelines, solar panels, natural gas and biofuels."

The article continues on, "Now that BP's oil rig has caused the biggest environmental disaster in American history, the left is pulling the same bogus trick it did with Enron and AIG. Whenever a company earns universal ire, declare it the poster boy for the free market. As Democrats fight to advance climate change policies," AKA global warming when it's not warming. Back to the article, "they are resorting to the misleading tactics they used in their health care and finance report: posing as the scourges of the special interest and tarring reform opponents as the stooges of big business. Expect BP to be public enemy number one in the climate debate. There's a problem. BP was a founding member of the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, a lobby dedicated to passing a cap-and-trade bill. As the Nation's largest producer of natural gas, BP saw many ways to profit from climate legislation, notably by persuading Congress to provide subsidies to coal-fired power plants that switch to gas. In February, BP quit the United States Climate Action Partnership without giving much of a reason beyond saying the company could lobby more effectively on its own than in a coalition that is increasingly dominated by power companies. They made out particularly well in the House climate bill, while natural gas producers suffer."

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And I am still reading from the article: "But 2 months later, BP signed off on Kerry's Senate climate bill, which was hardly a capitalist concoction. One provision BP explicitly backed, according to Congressional Quarterly and other media reports: a higher gas tax. The money would be earmarked for building more highways, thus inducing more driving and more gasoline consumption."

"Elsewhere in the green arena, BP has lobbied for and profited from subsidies for biofuels and solar energy, two products that cannot break even without government support. Lobbying records show the company backing solar subsidies including Federal funding for solar research. The U.S. Export-Import Bank, a Federal agency, is currently financing a BP solar energy project in Argentina."

"Export-Import has also put up taxpayer cash to finance construction of the 1,094-mile Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline carrying oil from the Caspian Sea to Ceyhan, Turkey—again, profiting BP. Lobbying records also show BP lobbying on Obama's stimulus bill