

I'm going to close this evening by talking a little bit about the America that I love.

The America that I love was populated by these crazy people that came here, and they had dreams to do amazing things, things that a lot of people would have said in Europe that you can't do that. And yet these people came to this country with these dreams, and the dreams as they worked on them became a vague possibility and then even a possibility. And finally they became a reality. And so America was built one dream at a time by different creative people that came to our land.

I think first of all of my favorite historic group of people, the Pilgrims coming to this land; and just over a hundred Pilgrims came. They had a dream of creating a civilization different than anything in Europe. You know, the teachers always say the Pilgrims came here for religious freedom which, of course, is silly. They had religious freedom in Holland. They didn't come here for that reason. They came with a much more grandiose idea. They wanted to build a new civilization unlike anything they'd seen in Europe.

And so they gave us certain ideas. They separated church government from civil government. They wrote a written Constitution called the Mayflower Compact, the first time in all of human history that a group of free people under God created a civil government to be their servants. The civil government servant, not master. That piece of paper signed on the great table of the Mayflower. In ye name of God, Amen. Goes on to say, We do covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic for the glory of God, the advancement of the Christian faith, and to frame such just and equal laws would be meet and necessary.

The first time there was a written Constitution under God of a group of free people making a civil government to be their servant, the entire foundation of the American civil government founded in 1620 because these people dared to have a dream, and when they came here within the first 3 months, half of them died. And the Mayflower going back to England said, You guys better give up. You started here as a little over a hundred, 103 people. Now you're down to barely just 50. You need to come back to England and give up. They said, No. We believe God called us here for a purpose.

So they said as they were dying as they got older and as Plymouth Colony survived and did well, they said they thought that they were stepping stones for people who were going to come after to build a new nation because they had a dream in their hearts of what this country could be. By the way, they threw out Socialism in Plymouth Colony because they knew it was unbiblical. They understood in 1620 what we don't understand in 2010.

They were followed by other kinds of people, all of the diversity of these peo-

ple that came with all of these crazy ideas. One of them built a hundred light bulbs and not one of them worked. And his attitude was very cheery. He said, Now I know a hundred ways to not make a light bulb. He kept trying and pretty soon Thomas Edison made his first light bulb.

So America was built this way on free enterprise by people having the courage to take a try at something and fail and try again. But it wasn't built by the government trying to give everybody jobs and the government taking everything over. They were trying to get away from those big kings of Europe. They wanted the government to be simply a servant, just a facilitator, a facilitator so people could enjoy what they believed were their God-given rights, to life, to liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness. They could pursue happiness. They knew the government could never guarantee happiness. But they just new that they could try.

And so it was for generations and generations. America became one of the most unique and exceptional countries in the world because it was based on a new idea, a new set of principles. Some people call it free enterprise. Some people call it the American Dream. Some people talk about it as the can-do attitude. And what we're doing is we're killing that dream.

And that's why we stand here on the floor and talk about these policies. What we're trying to do is to turn America back into Europe. We left Europe. We don't want to go back to Europe. Some people may want to go back to Europe. Be happy if they'd take a one-way ticket over there. Don't turn us into Europe with the socialistic policies of the government taking over everything.

We've seen so many examples of the Federal Government being lousy at doing what it does. We think about the efficiency of the post office, the compassion of the IRS. Think about the Energy Department. The Energy Department—people aren't aware it was created so that we wouldn't be dependent on foreign oil and ever since the Energy Department was created, we're more and more dependent on foreign oil. Talk about something totally failing in its mission.

And we've just seen what happened in the gulf oil spill. We've seen taking the President 50 days before he even contacted the head of BP. The President having the authority to put a team together of the best resources not only in the country but in the world and being unwilling to take these big ships that foreign countries owned that could come and suck up all of that oil and process the oil and spit the water out. But no, we're not going to do that. Dithering around with more and more government bureaucracy. Is this the sort of thing that we really want to put more trust in our Federal Government?

We've seen historically that federal governments of foreign countries have killed more people of their own citizens

than all the wars of history since the time of Christ. If you add up all of the people killed in wars since the time of Christ historically, there are less people killed by war than there are by governments killing their own citizens. Do we not have some natural fear of excessive government? I don't understand why we have this irrational faith in the efficiency of big government. It seems to me that it's just a very, very unwise place to be putting our faith. Why do we want to go back to Europe? It doesn't make sense.

I think we need to think, rather, in terms of the bright light and the freedom that comes from people being allowed to succeed or to fail, for people to be able to pursue their dreams. The Bible tells us that for every single human being in this world, God made a special job for them to do. And when people have the courage to just chase after what's in their heart, the dream that's in their heart, that's what makes great civilization. That was one of the things that distinguished America that made it such a unique and different Nation because people were able to follow the dream that was in their own heart.

And how can you do that if the government starts to keep taking everything over and taking more things over and taxing you and making it impossible for you to do the kinds of things that Americans for generations have done?

There are two views of America that we see. The view that you see now is the view that reflects the Democrat Party. What you have seen for 18 months is total Democrat decision-making. The Republicans on most of these issues vote "no," and we are totally ignored because we are, quite frankly, 40 votes short in this Chamber. And ignored in the Senate as well.

So what you see is Democrat policy, what you see is European policy, and what you see is the destruction of the American Dream. And that must stop.

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THE GULF OIL SPILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. RICHARDSON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to enter their remarks into the RECORD on this topic of the gulf oil spill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. RICHARDSON. I appreciate the opportunity to anchor this special hour tonight. My name is Congresswoman LAURA RICHARDSON, and I represent California's 37th Congressional District which includes the cities of Long

Beach, Compton, Carson, and Signal Hill. It's adjacent to the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, the largest port complex in the United States and the third-largest in the world.

For starters tonight, I want to take a look at what we're going to talk about in the report that I've prepared to present to the American people. As a Member of Congress, I'm a member of the Committee on Homeland Security, and I'm the subcommittee chair of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response, and so because of that, I felt it was important to share with the American people the information and the observations of what I'm now calling the people's Congress.

I'm here tonight to present to the United States Congress and the American people my report, my observations, and my recommendations regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It includes the responses that have been taken and the recovery that's needed for us to move forward.

So let's start with what happened back on April 20 at 10 p.m. Tragedy struck in the Gulf of Mexico. Just 42 miles from the population of the people in Venice, Louisiana, there was a fire, there was an explosion, and the Deepwater Horizon oil rig began to be engulfed in flames. After trying to quench the flames, people came from all over the country, even Holland, attempting to figure out how to put the fire out on this rig. After spending much time and much energy, 115 crewmembers were rescued and evacuated.

Eleven crewmembers, unfortunately, tragically died. These eleven men lost their lives: Jason Anderson, Dale Burkeen, Donald Clark, Stephen Curtis, Gordon Jones, Roy Wyatt Kemp, Karl Kleppinger, Blair Manual, Dewey Revette, Shane Roshto and Adam Weise. These 11 gentlemen were men. They were men who were fathers, brothers, sons, and uncles, and on behalf of myself and the House of Representatives and Americans, we express our prayers to their families and friends and commit to study the situation and not to repeat it again in the future.

So, in order for us to do that, we first have to understand what is the magnitude of this problem. Throughout the evening on April 20 and into the next day, gallant efforts were made, as I mentioned, to still save, even into the second and third day, the 11 missing men and to put out the fire that could be seen for miles. The men who were coming to put out this fire, they could see the fire on this rig for 2 hours prior to getting to the actual site. That's how large it was. Some say the fire was as high as 200 feet into the air.

So 2 days later, after they made very many attempts to be able to put the fire out, the heat was just entirely too hot and the metal began to collapse, and the platform and the rig collapsed, 5,000 feet to the floor of the ocean.

As the fire began to subside on April 24, just two short days later, it was re-

ported that oil was flowing into the ocean at a rate of at least 5,000 barrels per day. The United States has over 63,000 Federal onshore oil and gas wells. Having leaks and spills is also not something new to our country, but what is is the size and the magnitude.

Since 1990, there have been a total of 5,601 major pipeline incidences reported. That represents over \$4 billion in damage. Previously reported, the worst spill was in 1989 by the Exxon Valdez in Bligh Reef, in Prince William Sound, Alaska. The flow rate technical group of the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that the Exxon Valdez spilled approximately 750,000 barrels of oil. Now, let's put that in perspective.

The oil spill from the Deepwater Horizon has continued for over 80 days, although it has passed at this point, and it is believed that the Deepwater Horizon will supersede the Valdez by several times. How could that be? If the Deepwater Horizon is leaking at anywhere between 10,000, as has been reported, and as high as 65,000 barrels a day, and if you multiply that by a minimum of 80 days, you're talking about a range of 800,000 to 4.8 million barrels of oil.

Now, the Deepwater spill took place 42 miles from Venice, Louisiana, which has 572 miles affected out of 7,721 miles. Those are shoreline miles, and so what that's saying is the impacted area is approximately 7.4 percent. In Mississippi, they have over 108 miles that are affected out of 359 total tidal shoreline miles, which brings it at approximately 30 percent. Alabama has over 67 miles of coastline affected out of 607 total tidal shoreline miles, approximately 11 percent. And Florida has over 69 miles affected out of 5,095 total tidal shoreline miles, approximately 1 percent.

So when we consider the damages that have happened so far with this Deepwater Horizon spill, some of the damages that are caused are to the beaches that we will talk about tonight, to fish, to birds, the environment, other wildlife, the ecosystem, tourism and the economy, marine life, livelihoods, jobs, lost productivity, and let's not forget public health.

In light of the loss of life, the unusual depth of drilling, and the immediate disaster implication, responses from all levels were immediately activated. President Obama and the administration, through working with the U.S. Coast Guard, is historically the primary responder to U.S. coastal waters. The U.S. Coast Guard responded to the BP oil spill within hours. The Coast Guard began immediately operating an emergency search-and-rescue mission.

Leadership was established on April 21, less than 1 day later. On April 21, a day after the explosion, pursuant to the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, Rear Admiral Mary Landry was made Federal on-scene coordinator.

On April 22, less than 2 days later, after the explosion, the national re-

sponse team, led by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, was activated along with additional regional response teams. These regional response teams are formed for many reasons. The teams typically include a United States Coast Guard representative, someone from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior and State and local representatives. The purpose of these regional response teams is to coordinate, to partner, to communicate, and to respond.

The regional response teams began developing plans, providing technical assistance and access to resources and equipment from its member agencies, as well as overseeing BP's response. Some workers, like Jay Harper from the Department of Homeland Security, have been working since day one, which is now 91 days straight, in response to the Deepwater Horizon spill. In this picture you see Jay and I viewing the source site, and he's pointing out information to me of where the actual source is, where the burns are taking place, and the whole aspect of what we could view from the plane.

On April 23, an incident command system stood up and was in accordance with the national response framework and the NCP. The purpose of the incident command system is to provide a common method for developing and implementing tactical plans to efficiently and effectively manage a multiagency response, and certainly this was it. The ICS organization for this response included incident command posts and unified commands at the local level, as well as a unified command at the regional level.

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The next step was on April 29, just 9 days from the explosion, Secretary Napolitano designated the oil spill as a spill of national significance. This designation enabled Secretary Napolitano to appoint then U.S. Coast Guard Commander Thad Allen to serve as the National Incident Commander, the lead national coordinator in charge of Federal efforts.

On May 21, 2010, President Obama issued an Executive order creating the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling to respond to this spill. Further, President Barack Obama simultaneously has made four trips to the gulf to oversee the spill and to supervise the cleanup efforts.

On June 9, The New York Times reported that Rear Admiral James A. Watson, the on-scene coordinator of the Unified Command overseeing the response effort, wrote to British Petroleum, giving the company 3 days to provide plans. Among the requirements are that any new method, most importantly, that would contain the leak would be devised to reduce disruptions from a potential hurricane, which we are now approaching that season.

The letter came amid continuing questions about how much of the leaking oil was being captured by BP's latest containment effort, what we now know to be called the top hat. Also, there were questions of whether the company could be collecting more and what other processes could be used.

Finally, there were concerns about whether BP had failed to provide enough surface equipment. So when I had an opportunity to go to the gulf, and having read all of this, these were the things that I wanted to see. When you look at the source site of the Deepwater Horizon spill, what you will notice is there are multiple platforms, multiple vessels that are used to all coordinate in one sync to eliminate the gushing of oil that was coming into the gulf. And this was the scene that I saw just 1 week ago.

So when Rear Admiral Watson directed his letter, the things that he wanted to make sure that we were considering is incorporating the hurricanes, because the gulf is very much an area—as you can see, the waters are very calm here, but given very high winds and higher seas, these platforms and these vessels could easily be submerged as well.

When we talk about some of the things that have been done and when we look at the cleanup, 5.4 billion barrels were spilled into the gulf it is potentially believed; 2.6 million barrels were either evaporated or degraded; 823,000 barrels have been siphoned, and these are some of the various devices that helped to do this; and 262,000 barrels have been burned off, which is what you see of this flame. This is not the rig on fire. The rig had already collapsed into the ocean. This is to be able to pull the oil and to be able to burn the excess area, and 100,000 barrels have been skimmed.

Now, when we go to June 15, 2010, President Obama used his first Oval Office speech to address the Nation for 18 minutes and to talk about the oil spill that was carried on prime-time television to many TV networks. President Obama emphasized that we will fight the spill with everything we have got for as long as it takes.

When I participated in a hearing just a couple weeks ago, that was the question that the mayor asked us, Will you be here for as long as it takes? President Obama also said that he wanted to make sure that BP paid for the damages that had been caused, and he also stated that whatever was necessary to help the gulf coast and its people recover from this tragedy, we would do.

On June 16, 2010, BP agreed to create an independent \$20 billion fund to pay the claims arising from the oil spill. The company also said it would suspend paying dividends to its shareholders for the rest of the year and would compensate workers for their lost wages.

Now, let's talk about the congressional action and the things we have done in this House in relation to the

Deepwater oil spill. In relation to the administration's response, Mr. Speaker, Congress has taken significant actions since the oil spill to respond to this crisis.

Over the last 93 days, the U.S. Congress and the Senate have conducted over 24 Washington, D.C. hearings. We have conducted two field hearings, 75 on-site Member of Congress or Senate visits. H.R. 5503, the SPILL Act, last month was passed by the House, and it was passed in order to reform maritime liability laws.

Those laws were impacted by the Death on High Seas Act, the Jones Act, which we have heard much discussion about, and the Limitation on Liability Act. This bill is intended to ensure that the families of those who were killed or injured in the BP spill and other such tragedies are justly compensated for their losses.

On July 1, this House passed the 2010 supplemental appropriations bill, which includes aid measures requested by the Obama administration in response to this disaster. Included in this bill was funding for agencies that are working in the gulf to monitor the water, the air quality, the seafood safety, and worker health.

The bill also extends the time that the Secretary of the Interior would have to review an offshore drilling application. Current law only allows the Secretary 30 days to review the process, which is way too short of a time to complete a full review of increasingly complex drilling plans associated with deepwater drilling.

Then, H.R. 5481 was passed by this House to give subpoena power to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. This is a bipartisan commission that our President formed. It's chaired by former Senator Bob Graham of Florida and former EPA Administrator William Reilly, and it was established on May 22. Its task is providing recommendations on how we can prevent future spills from originating from offshore drilling and mitigate any impact.

Then we have gone to S. 3473, which is access to the trust fund, and it impacts the liability trust fund. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that we have the tools necessary to respond to the BP oil spill. Last month, Congress passed S. 3473 to permit the Coast Guard to obtain one or more advances from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to underwrite Federal responses and activities related to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Under the law, the Coast Guard can only withdraw up to \$100 million from the fund to finance emergency response efforts. After an accident and that money has run out, that can become a problem.

The trust fund was created by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and is funded by an 8-cent fee that is paid by all of the oil companies on each barrel of oil. This legislation has been signed by the President.

Finally, the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act. That act was passed and the House enabled it so that it would protect the coastal economies by ensuring that oil companies would pay to strengthen the solvency of the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund instead of passing the buck onto the taxpayers. That measure will raise the fee of oil companies that they will pay per barrel and increase the current \$1 billion cap on individual claims against the fund to \$5 billion, and increase the \$500 million cap on natural resource damages assessment to \$2.5 billion. Currently the trust fund has a balance of roughly \$1.6 billion.

Now, let's talk about my observations. We have talked about the tragedy that happened. We have talked about what the administration has done, and we have talked about what Congress has done in terms of legislation.

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So now let's talk about some of the things that I've seen.

I've made two trips to the gulf. Both trips were with the jurisdiction of the Homeland Security Committee of Government Oversight and Emergency Preparedness and Response. After viewing the news updates, I'll be honest, I anticipated seeing thousands and thousands of miles of oiled water. I expected to see every marsh covered in oil. I expected to see birds everywhere covered in oil. I expected to see sandy beaches covered in oil. And I expected to see no fishermen allowed to fish, and certainly no New Orleans businesses.

Indeed, it is true, over 500 miles of oil has gone onto the beaches in the gulf. This is a picture that shows the work that was done on the beaches. Now, you can actually see the work area in that far right section. You can see the booms that have been laid out. You can even see the restroom for the workers to be able to use as they clean the beaches. So you can see the booms, the nets, and even on this farther picture, you can see where the previous oil had gone across on the beaches. There are 3,617 birds have been rescued, 2,333 birds died, thousands of fishermen have been without work. And an 83,927 mile area has been disallowed for fishing.

The destruction has been immense, and the final estimates are far from being in. However, many of the challenges involved in reporting and responding have been overcome in the last 40 days. That's why I wanted to speak today, because I've been watching the news on a regular basis, hearing every single night of the individual incidents that have occurred, but we've heard very little about what our government and our representatives and the people who have been working every day have been doing.

Typically what happens on a daily basis is the planes go out, they survey the area, and they look at their various radar to see where the oil spill locations are. Once they observe them from

the air, they send the boats out, which then move forward and put the various booms out to either do burning or skimming. And then you also have some of the things that many of the elected officials in the local area had asked for, and that was the dropping of the sandbags. You can see this area where the sandbags were put in to prevent the oil from coming into the marsh area. Also, if you look very closely here, you will see the booms that were set in order to prevent the oil from coming into this marsh area.

Men and women are working around the clock. The administration has authorized and deployed 17,500 National Guard troops of which 1,580 have been activated. Approximately 45,000 personnel are currently responding to protect the shoreline and the wildlife and cleanup of our vital coastlines. And while there have been delays in equipment supply, the Coast Guard and Federal Government have been diligent in working to get the equipment that we need.

More than 6,800 vessels have responded on site, including skimmers, tubs, barges, and recovery vessels, all set to assist in the containment and the cleanup effort. In addition, hundreds of aircraft make the trip daily, as I said, remotely operated vehicles, and multiple mobile offshore drilling units to be able to clean up the disparate oil that has hit our shores.

Currently, approximately 572 miles of the gulf coast shoreline has been affected directly by the oil spill; approximately 328 miles in Louisiana, 108 miles in Mississippi, 67 miles in Alabama, and 69 miles in Florida. What many hardworking people have done is to set up 17 staging areas to protect many of our sensitive shoreline areas. This is an area where you can see actual workers where they go out; they actually go into the marsh area. You can see the pattern of where the oil has come in and where they're working to actually remove the oil. You also can see at this point some of the different—this is a boom that they're using in this area, and you can see inside in the marsh area where there is a tremendous amount of oil that had been spilled, but on the inner part it is still green and we hope will still survive.

Approximately 83,927 square miles of Gulf of Mexico Federal waters remain closed to fishing in order to balance the economic and public health concerns. We hope that soon those areas will be open once we can validate that in fact the fish that are living there that would be fished will be safe for consumption for people to eat.

Now, what was interesting to me is that when I was watching all the news about the oil spill, I just simply didn't understand why they didn't just put a boom around the entire source site. It seemed to me it wasn't that big and it would have prevented the oil from going to all these other States that we've talked about. Well, this is why—and I had no idea, and this is why I

wanted to be here tonight so we could educate the American public because we're not seeing this on the news of why just having more boom is not fixing the problem.

When you look at the boom here, you can see that just by a simple small wave of not even one foot actually goes over and covers the boom area. So that's why whether you have six miles of boom or 10 miles of boom, it can only cover so much. Now, here you have workers who were actually collecting the boom that has collected some of the oil, and we can see how it has worked. But unfortunately it takes a lot of boom, and it takes completely replacing it.

More than 3.2 million feet of containment boom and 6.6 million feet absorbent boom have been deployed to contain the spill, and approximately 875,000 feet of containment boom remain. So as they watch where the oil is moving, they will have boom to move to that section.

One of the things I heard a lot about was something called "the whale." They said it's large, it's from Taiwan, and it would be able to pick up all of the oil. This is a picture of the whale, as they call it. And as you can see here, here is some of the oil that the whale is picking up. Now, this whale is 1,150 feet long. It's quite an amazing site, but it's only one indication of the 20-plus international partners that we have had that the administration has been able to leverage with assets and skills from numerous foreign countries and international organizations as a part of this historic all-hands-on-deck response. Some of those countries are Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Russia, Spain, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United Nations International, and then some.

So let's talk a little bit more about some of the particular sites. You're seeing kind of the aerial view, but we had an opportunity to actually go to some of the parishes and to see some of the impacted areas in addition to the marsh area. One of the places we went to was St. Tammany Parish. I visited this area, and they already had an operating emergency operation center, and there I met Commander Dan Precourt. Commander Precourt is the parish liaison officer for St. Tammany Parish. His position is important because what we learned from Hurricane Katrina, one of those most important lessons, was that there simply was not enough communication between local officials and the public during that disaster. But at the St. Tammany Parish Emergency Operation Center, there is a Coast Guard liaison, there is Commander Precourt, as well as a representative from BP, and many other people who are working there, working together to talk about how the agencies can solve this problem.

The public liaisons are meeting with someone face to face so that they can

respond to their problem or can direct them to someone who can. Support is coming from California, Alaska, Massachusetts, and many other States. What I found interesting that we don't hear so much about with this whole spill situation is that these people are working 7 days a week, oftentimes coming in at 6 a.m., leaving anywhere between 9 and 10 p.m., and many of them actually worked on Father's Day.

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I was there on Sunday evening at about 8 o'clock, and there were still over 10 people there, working.

Tammany Parish is not one of the centers of the oil spill. In fact, it was particularly alarming to me, because I have friends and know people from Louisiana, when I heard that oil was found at Lake Pontchartrain. I thought, "Oh, no." Most people know and enjoy the area of Lake Pontchartrain, but fortunately and actually—and what wasn't told and why we wanted to talk about this tonight—oil was discovered at the initial pass, which is called Rigolets Pass. At this time, the lake is fishable. We want people to know that. They are fishing in Lake Pontchartrain, and no oil has been found west of the I-10 bridge.

Thousands of men and women depend upon fishing for their livelihoods. As was said in one of the local shows this morning, we have to make sure that people know that people are still fishing, that people are still living, that people are still eating, and that they are still vacationing on the coast. The Coast Guard is trying every feasible option available to stop this spill.

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Now, before I visited and when I looked at some of the things that had been said, one of the things we heard people talking about were the impacts on wildlife and the environment. I had an opportunity to go to the wildlife fisheries with representatives both from the State of Louisiana and the United States, and we got a chance to see where they had taken many of the birds so they could be cleaned and could get extra help.

This picture is of a very dedicated veterinarian who had worked very long hours to help aid and assist the birds. This is the team that actually put up this system, which was pretty much out of wire and 2 by 4s. I mean it really was a very, what I would say, kind of archaic system, but it was working to help with the birds.

You see me there. We are talking about the pelicans that have been cleaned, how they are recovering and how soon we expect them to be returned to the wild.

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Some of the beauties of the Gulf of Mexico are the marshes, the wildlife, and all the incredible things that you see. This is one of the dedicated gentlemen whom I mentioned who works for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Jack Bohannon. He is on the water boat, and this is what they do. They survey the marsh

area to see if oil has gone into that section so they know where to put the boom or where to make replacements.

Here you see the Coast Guard commander of this particular area. It was the protected area, the marsh section called Pass a Loutre. This is Commander Claudia Gelzer, and she has been working very hard to keep the oil out and to minimize the damage to this much protected area.

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It is somewhat hard to imagine, when you think of the oil coming in, how you would possibly stop it, or as I would kind of say, "corral it," to be able to put it into a section where it could be safely burned and evaporated. This is an example of where you see a marsh area where the boom has been laid. They went out, and they found out there was an area where oil existed. They corralled it, brought it into the section. Then this is how they were able to safely set it afire.

This is another example of what I wanted to show of how you have the boom area protecting the local coast section. Very low down here, you can see where some of the oil had initially come, and that is why they have the boom area protecting this section, which is to keep the oil out.

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Now, to talk about Pass a Loutre, not only is it an incredible area in terms of marshland, of over 115,000 acres of marshland, what is also particularly important about this is that it is a preserve area as well. Unfortunately, it was right in the eye of the storm of the Deepwater Horizon, and for the oil that came out, this was one of the first spots that it came to.

What we are showing you here are the first initial marsh areas. What I want the people to see is that not all of the marsh areas, not all of the 115,000 acres, are filled with oil. That is something that I didn't particularly understand as I was watching some of the news results. You look at our going out to the boat area. You see some of the low areas where some of the oil has come. Here you see it a little bit higher. Then, in this area, you see where oil very severely came in and impacted the marsh area.

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This area is characterized by river channels with attendant channel banks, natural bayous, and manmade canals, which are interspersed with intermediate fresh marshes. Hurricane damage and subsidence have contributed to a major part of the vegetation and the marshes not being as strong as they had been in the past.

So, in this area here, I found this interesting. I rode on a helicopter for about 45 minutes and then on a boat for about 30 minutes to be able to finally get to the spot where the worst amount of the oil impacting the marshes had taken place.

So the message of what I want to say tonight is, yes, a horrible thing has happened, yes, to many areas that we

love, have gone to for generations, and have cherished. But the important thing to remember is that it is not in a position where we cannot fix it with the work and the commitment to do so.

So what you see here is I'm reaching in and touching some of the oil that has accumulated here in this section. Then, on this portion here, is the actual entrance into one of the marsh canals. You can see literally where the oil just kind of traveled inside, came in and basically accumulated in this section here of what you see.

Next slide, please.

So we look at these marsh areas and what we can do to fix them. Some of the complaints that were made were: Why didn't we have enough boom? How come we couldn't get the boom out there quickly enough? This is what is very important for people to see.

Here you can see the boom is normally a yellow color. This is where oil has come over, and you can see it only takes about half of a foot of a wave or a foot of a wave to be able to go in. Here is where they are replacing it and putting new ones out and trying to keep it out, and then, of course, they are using the booms farther out in the area.

Next slide, please.

This, I think, was important to show in that, as the booms are collecting oil, they become filled with it. Then you have to go back out and remove them and place more in their place. So here you can see a tremendous amount of oil that had accumulated. It has been absorbed in these booms, and then they will be going out to these areas to place new ones.

Then one of the things that is also important to understand as to why the booms alone are not the answer is that, with the wind and with the waves, it begins to move them into the marsh areas, so it actually moves them out from protecting the outer area. So that's why the booms are not the permanent solution to this problem.

Next slide, please.

As I prepared this report, what I call "the people's Congress," I would be wrong not to acknowledge the efforts of Secretary Napolitano and Chairman THOMPSON for providing the access, for demonstrating transparency, and for showing a willingness to consider all of the options on the table for the betterment of America and for the American people.

In order to improve even further, here are some of the lessons that I learned from some of the things that I've shown you tonight:

Elected officials in the local area talked about the fact that we have had past exercises. We have had national exercises in the gulf regions, and so you would ask the question: Why were there some of the problems we experienced?

Some of the things they talked about were their still not being connected on the calls, the daily calls, until a couple of weeks into the situation, and the

impact on the local economy, when many of the areas really were not having an extensive amount of oil. You also had people sounding the alarm, expressing their concerns of how were we going to pay for all of the recovery that was going to be required. You had others who said we weren't moving fast enough and that we needed to do more. Still others said the teams should be changed.

Though I want to talk about another area that also became very clear to me, a lesson learned.

One of the recommendations I made when we had our hearing was to say to the Coast Guard and to the Department of Homeland Security that we need to also have our own message, which is why I am here tonight. We need to make sure that we are showing the American people, as they also have an opportunity to watch, that, yes, many marsh areas have been damaged. Yes, beaches have had oil come upon them. But yes, there are many other areas where they can still come, where they can enjoy, and where we hope that our marshes will survive.

When you look at some of the reports and when you look at the current state of the situation—and even in the hearing they acknowledged—things have gotten better. A lot of that is due to now being included in those calls, it is due to the transparency of what has been happening, and to the daily updates from Rear Admiral Allen. One of the key things they talked about was having a message that was understandable and in layman's terms.

So that is why I came here tonight, because what the public had been asking for and what some of the elected officials had been asking for is just to show us what you are seeing and what we are doing in just regular terms. It is something very simple, but it basically conveys the message of what has happened.

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When you also look at some of the improvements and what we've learned and with being the subcommittee chair of Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response, and it's very important to look at these things. How soon was the 1-800 number up? How many claims have been filled? You look at where did the boom come from? How long did it take it to get there? How much did we already have? How many skimmers did we have? How many do we still need?

These are all the things that we have now learned and we've learned in previous spills, as well, that we need to do to be prepared for a spill, unfortunately, of this size.

Now, when we talk about layman's terms, one of the key things that I think is important to acknowledge is the Gulf of Mexico. This is a picture of a very sensitive area. You can see that the marsh is not very deep, but it's pretty much covered all the way around with boom. It's green. The

water is blue. But we are fighting on a daily basis to keep it that way, and we have 45,000 personnel who are working to fix the problem.

So when we talk about the clear lessons, some of the other things that I think that should be considered are: one, we need to make sure that as we consider how we respond to a spill, that we're prepared to make the adjustments in a hurricane season as well.

I showed you pictures of the bird estuary and where they were cleaning up the birds. They are actually in the process of moving from that area because it's not stable enough. So if, in fact, a hurricane were to come, we would lose many birds as well from that experience. So we have to be including different agencies in that emergency process and to ensure that those places are set up throughout the region so that they're ready if something like this crisis does, in fact, occur.

Another thing that we also have learned is that when we talk about communication, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting an active to extremely active hurricane season for 2010, with a chance, 70 percent chance for 14 to 23 named storms. So the clock is ticking, and that's why people are working so hard to be ready.

Another key point that is very important to consider has to do with legislation. Now, I mentioned earlier some of the legislation that the House has already passed, but there are other suggestions that should be considered as well.

One of the things that we found, in terms of response and who's in charge, is that when you looked at the marsh area, the Louisiana Wildlife individual felt that if you had oil in the marsh, that you should leave it there and allow it to eventually work its way out. The United States, at the Federal level, said it's better to go in to cut it open, to flush some water to go through to remove the oil and to get it out from just sitting there. So they were having to make those decisions.

And I would venture to say that we should actually have those kinds of plans in advance. We should know that for certain parts of our country, we have marsh areas and that if, in the event there are oil spills, and I already mentioned to you that there's been 6,000 in our period of time here in the United States, that we should already have an adopted policy that we agree to of how we get the oil out of the marsh. Do we leave the oil in or do we open it up to be able to flush clear water through? That was one of the things that I asked at the hearing that we had.

Another important thing to consider with legislation is to make sure that it would have proper mitigation, and that's what I'm talking about with the marsh. We should already determine what the potential costs are. We shouldn't be waiting until something

unfortunately happens and then we're trying to guesstimate.

We should also make sure that mitigation includes natural resource restoration. When you look at mitigation, it's loss of life, loss of limb, loss of property. But it's also, we have grown to know, it's a loss of our natural ecosystem as well. So when we consider funding that's available for mitigation, we need to make sure enough is there for that restoration as well.

We also need to make sure that we have adequate information that's prepared independently, not of a particular independent private source, that will actually provide us the information and say what would be required to restore our ecosystem to its natural level.

Sensitive natural resource areas can be identified early, and they can be done so to adequately protect them from an oil spill and also help with associated cleanup operations. The damage impact assessment should be thorough and it should be accurate and it doesn't have to be late. Habitat restoration is the preferred method to mitigate for impacts of natural resources from an oil spill and associated cleanup activities. A detailed mitigation plan should be prepared.

These are the things that I saw and that I learned that I plan on bringing forward with my colleagues to consider on this very floor.

When you talk about adequate funding for restoration activities, it should be provided based upon the actual cost and not what we think it might be. We should have to have time lines. There should be strict penalties, feasible objectives. There should be separate oversight from the initiators and the implementers, and, certainly, there should be periodic updates.

So when you look at the Oil and Fuel Spill Readiness Act, another piece of legislation that I think this House should consider, we shouldn't have to, when we have a spill, scramble for a couple of weeks and try and get enough boom and try and get enough skimmers and try and get enough of everything to deal with an incredible disaster. These are things based upon the depth and the amount of oil that's being pulled from the ocean floor that we should be able to consider what would be needed if, in the event, a disaster were to occur.

A readiness act would be able to have lessons learned from this Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It should include objective academic minds and expertise. It should include standards and require all emergency planning. And it should also include, as I've said, environment and wildlife as well.

Now, as we talk about what I call the people's Congress, this House is one where we have an opportunity to represent approximately 650,000 Americans, and I happen to be fortunate enough to be one of those people. And so, as I rise today and I talk about this Special Order, one of the things you

find quickly being a Member of Congress is that it's your area that you represent, but you also represent—you're a United States Representative, which means you're not only looking for your district but for other districts as well.

And so when this incident happened and it fell within the committee of jurisdiction of my particular area, I felt, really, it was a responsibility because we have oil wells and pipelines in my area as well. And what happened in Louisiana could happen in any coastline in this country, and so it behooves us to be prepared and to learn our lessons.

As I've explained tonight, we can start looking forward in a constructive way. We can work together with Federal, State, and local elected officials and agencies and private partners on solving these problems. Millions of people depend upon the gulf for their livelihood, for family history, and it is home to valuable animals as a part of their families, plants, and environments.

I am optimistic. And while this is certainly one of the biggest challenges this Nation has ever faced, one thing we know for sure about the United States is that we're always ready to rebound. We don't see things as insurmountable, and we do believe that they can be made right.

The last slide I am showing you tonight is not the marsh area before the oil spill. In fact, it's after. What you see in this marsh area is that it is in its full and beautiful state. It's perfectly green. You see the canals that are there supporting it. As we continue to work to respond to this oil spill and we put the recovery things in place, we can ensure that the rest of the 115,000 acres can look again like this particular section does as well.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to be able to share my thoughts, kind of a testimony of what I saw in the gulf, painting a picture for the American people of what is really happening and what so many incredible people are doing to really restore and to fix something that was originally a disaster that I think can come back to look like this particular slide does.

With that, I am appreciative for all of the efforts, as I said, of Chairman THOMPSON on our committee, Secretary Napolitano, of her working with all the Members of Congress and Senate to visit the gulf. We look forward to continuing to work, to do our lessons learned, and to put better systems in place so that we won't repeat the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title: