

	NEWS FROM		
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Statement by the Honorable Bobby L. Rush, Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on
Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection
Hearing: “The BP Oil Spill and the Gulf Coast Tourism: Assessing the Impact”

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

WASHINGTON — “The subcommittee will come to order.

“April 20, 2010 was a tragic day for the people of the Gulf Coast region of the United States.

“Eleven workers died following an explosion on the Deep Water Horizon oil rig located 40 miles, offshore, in the Gulf of Mexico. Since that day, an estimated *50 to 150 million gallons of oil* have leaked into the gulf, severely damaging our environment, destroying families’ way of life and severely damaging the entire region’s economy.

“Tourism is the gulf region’s second largest industry, generating more than *\$39 billion* in state revenue. Tourism represents 46 percent of the region’s economy and employs over one million people. Various studies indicate that the oil spill has put 300,000 jobs at risk, representing 15 percent of the total job base in that region.

“The saddest part of this story is that some of the businesses that are impacted, today, were still recovering from the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina tragedy five years ago.

“Now that BP has created a \$20 billion claims pool to compensate victims who’ve been impacted by the oil spill, the purpose of this hearing is to make sure that the travel and tourism industry will not be left behind.

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“Why? Because of the intricacy of that particular industry, the complexity of the methodology that needs to be employed to determine the level of damages, and fair compensation, and because of the tourism industry’s vast economic impact on the entire Gulf Coast region.

“We have learned from the massive media coverage of the BP oil spill, and by various studies by the tourism industry, itself, that the region is losing business not only because the beaches may not be safe but, also, because travelers *think* it is not safe to travel to the Gulf Coast region of the United States!

“We have also heard the concerns of the industry about the claims process, its time frame for compensation and eligibility.

“Finally, we also have to consider what needs to be done to bring back the industry to the stature it had *before* the oil spill.

“These are difficult issues we will have to examine, here, today. The complexity of the matter may require more than one hearing.

“Nevertheless, I respectfully request that Members of the subcommittee shorten their opening remarks, as I have done, so that we may have more time to hear from the witnesses and allow them to respond to as many questions as possible, this morning. I also understand some witness have time constraints.

“I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before this subcommittee. We all have concerns about the tourism industry and how it will be compensated and revitalized. I hope our discussion is productive.

“With that, I yield back the balance of my time.”

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