

ALLEN BOYD
SECOND DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE AND RELATED AGENCIES

DEFENSE

FINANCIAL SERVICES
AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT

COMMITTEE:
BUDGET

Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515

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June 3, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you know, hurricane season began on June 1, and with it comes the usual preparedness that many in North Florida and those along the Gulf of Mexico know well. However, this season poses a unique challenge with the impacts of the Deepwater Horizon spill still threatening our coasts and livelihoods.

At the time of this letter, there appears to be no coordinated federal plan or effort to deal with the potential disaster a hurricane could pose if it reached the Gulf and brought the oil onshore. I understand that the impact a hurricane could have on the spread of oil would be significant. There is the potential that the booms would be compromised or would have to be dismantled, that oil underneath the sea could be brought up, and worse, the hurricane could bring that oil inland for miles contaminating towns, homes, schools, and businesses.

We are already feeling significant economic and environmental effects from the spill. Our fishermen, tourism industries, and many others are bracing for a bad year due to a situation that was out of their control. It is important that we do not make the situation worse for the residents of Florida and the Gulf Coast due to a lack of planning in the event of a hurricane. I believe we are in immediate need of a comprehensive federal hurricane preparedness and recovery plan to minimize the effects of the damage that will be caused by a possible natural disaster with unknown consequences.

That is why I am proposing the Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference to discuss the hazards associated with a hurricane's impact on the oil spill and to determine the steps to prepare for a hurricane, the necessary measures to be taken in the immediate aftermath, and the long term regional recovery plan. The specific actions to prepare for a hurricane in conjunction with the oil spill should be determined, including the procurement or movement of cleanup equipment like booms and skimmers, methods to determine the impact of oil movement following a hurricane, pre-positioning members of the National Guard to immediately act as first responders, methods to inform and involve local communities, and the establishment of a military and civilian command and control structure to coordinate the response actions.

The command and control structure of a coordinated military and civilian response is critical for the preparation and execution of such a plan. Hurricane Katrina proved the importance of such a coordinated response, and the 601st Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida immediately became the headquarters for recovery planning and execution. Because of their unique role as resident experts in command and control and disaster response preparation and execution in North America, I am recommending that the Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference take place at the 601st AOC.

My national level planning conference would require the attendance of key decision makers, and I intend to invite the following agencies and organizations: United States Northern Command, Department of the Air Force, Department of the Navy, National Guard Bureau, United States Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, FEMA, Department of Interior, Department of Environmental Protection, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and British Petroleum. The conferees should be given the liberty and requirement to determine the procedures and methods to prepare for, analyze, and recover from the combined impacts of a hurricane and the oil spill on the Gulf of Mexico states.

Mr. President, our nation is in uncharted territory, and our government needs to be proactive in our steps to prepare for the unknown impact a hurricane would have on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane season began June 1 and we need a plan in place before a hurricane hits the Gulf of Mexico. I have selected the 14th of June as my target date for the Joint Oil Spill-Hurricane Planning Conference at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. I respectfully request your Administration's full support, cooperation, and participation in our efforts to prepare our Gulf Coast and the nation for what could add even more devastation to the oil spill disaster.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

F. Allen Boyd, Jr.
MEMBER OF CONGRESS