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**THE BP GULF OIL SPILL - FOUR YEARS LATER  
STATEMENT BY  
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FORMER CO-CHAIRS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL  
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING**

“Four years after BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Congress has still not taken action to reduce the risk of another accident involving deepwater drilling.

We are particularly concerned because, while Congress has done little if anything to make drilling safer, many Members are advocating expanding deepwater drilling into frontier areas such as the Arctic and along the East Coast.

President Obama's National Oil Spill Commission made fundamental, common-sense recommendations including Congressional action on improved operational safety for rigs, eliminating conflicts in regulatory agencies, and expanding liability to ensure companies involved with drilling have the means to respond adequately to emergencies. These recommendations have been ignored by Congress.

When BP's Deepwater Horizon rig blew out, it created one of the worst environmental disasters in American history. Eleven crew members died and more than 200 million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf, causing immense damage to the economy and to the environment.

And though we do welcome the legislation Congress enacted to provide substantial resources to restore environmental damage caused by the spill and decades of ecological mismanagement, we are concerned that this effort is faltering as states propose to devote these resources to fund unrelated activities, such as ball fields and port improvements, or divert them to general revenues. Moreover, Congress has not provided resources to ensure that restoration funds are managed properly according to sound accounting principles as funds are dispersed. The one bright spot in the restoration effort is the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's restoration program, which is proceeding apace.

In contrast to Congress's inaction, we are generally pleased with the way the industry and the executive branch have moved ahead on the Commission's recommendations to improve the safety of offshore drilling and the capacity to respond to spills. Federal regulatory agencies are implementing new rules regarding oversight of the industry and bolstering their enforcement activities. Government and industry are working together to create a safety-conscious culture in the offshore drilling industry. And the industry has substantially improved its capacity to respond to rupturing wells by pre-positioning caps for ready deployment should trouble occur. Thus, offshore drilling is safer than it was four years ago.

We take heart, too, that the Gulf economy is recovering. Much of the seafood industry has rebounded to levels prior to the spill although reduced populations of oysters and harm to other species continue to present serious problems for those who depend on these species for their livelihoods. Tourism and resulting revenues along the Gulf coast are setting records, often well above pre-spill levels. Unemployment rates in most Gulf states are below the national average. And there are now more active drilling rigs in the Gulf than before the *Deepwater Horizon* spill.

In sum, good progress is evident in the executive branch and in industry, while Congress continues to straggle.”