



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

April 26, 2010

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science
& Transportation
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science
& Transportation
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy &
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa A. Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy &
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rockefeller, Chairman Bingaman, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

Last Tuesday's explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico is a tragedy for the families and friends of the missing and injured workers, and also a sobering reminder of the real risk from oil drilling. The explosion, ensuing fire, and continuing spill raise serious concerns about the industry's claims that their operations and technology are safe enough to put rigs in areas that are environmentally sensitive or are critical to tourism or fishing industries.

This may be the worst disaster in recent years, but it's certainly not an isolated incident. Before the explosion Tuesday, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) reported 509 fires resulting in at least two fatalities and 12 serious injuries on rigs in the Gulf of Mexico since 2006.

Three federal entities -- the Coast Guard, MMS, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) -- are integrally involved in the response, recovery and restoration operations. We therefore request a joint hearing by the committees that oversee those agencies: the Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee and Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee. We must also examine whether the Coast Guard and NOAA have the resources available to respond to this and future spills.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

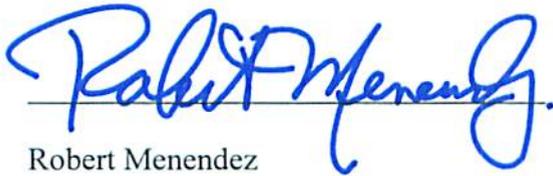
Sincerely,



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator