

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0907

June 14, 2010

The President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6275

Dear Mr. President:

In advance of your visit to Northwest Florida, we write to you concerning the ongoing environmental and economic disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Your meeting with emergency management officials in Pensacola tomorrow is welcomed by the people of Florida. We continue to urge you to focus every resource at your disposal on mitigating and remediating the damages caused by this disaster.

However, in our conversations with local officials and impacted business-owners and families in the Panhandle of Florida, the issues are clear: BP must fix and enhance its claims process to better address the severe economic stress this spill has caused; bureaucratic obstacles must be removed so that all available resources can be deployed; and federal officials must convey a sense of urgency for the work that remains – no more mistakes, like those that allowed oil into Pensacola Bay, should be tolerated.

We were pleased to see news reports over the weekend that you agree BP must establish an escrow fund from which the residents and businesses of the Gulf Coast region may receive monetary compensation for the economic losses they continue to suffer. BP's affirmative commitment of substantial dollars is critical to mitigating the economic fallout of this disaster.

It is, however, equally important that you utilize the full authority of the Office of the President to address the environmental impact of this disaster. We remain concerned that inadequate resources are being dedicated to containing and removing oil from the Gulf *before* it reaches our fragile coastline.

For example, on Friday, Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen reported that throughout the United States there are over 2,000 skimmer vessels available for use in the Gulf. Yet, as of this weekend, Florida officials report that only 32 skimmers are deployed off the state's coast. Additionally, there are numerous reports that offers by foreign corporations

or governments to send skimmer vessels to the Gulf have been refused as a result of concerns arising from the Jones Act, which, among other things, regulates the use of foreign-owned vessels between U.S. ports. However, your Administration has the authority to waive any bureaucratic barriers that may exist under the Jones Act. Specifically, 46 U.S.C. § 501 provides the Maritime Administrator with the authority to temporarily waive any Jones Act restrictions on the operation of foreign-owned skimmers in the Gulf. We urge you to immediately direct that a waiver be granted so that all available skimmer vessels can be deployed in the Gulf of Mexico to collect the oil before it reaches the beaches.

We must utilize every available resource to mitigate the impact of this disaster on our economy and environment. We will look forward to discussing these issues with you tomorrow in Pensacola.

Sincerely,



George S. LeMieux  
United States Senator



Jeff Miller  
United States Congressman