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Subcommittee on Water and Power

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
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Secretary Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

The ongoing Deepwater Horizon oil spill has put the Minerals Management Service back in the public spotlight. Specifically, your recent announcement that you intend to divide the royalty collection and enforcement segments of the agency is one step in the right direction to make the agency more transparent and accountable. However, a number of questions remain about how the administration will oversee the environmental and worker safety risks of deep water oil rigs.

As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, I have previously written to the Department of the Interior about whistleblower allegations that a separate BP rig in the Gulf of Mexico has been operating for several years without the proper safety documentation. This recent disaster has only intensified my belief that expansion of deep water drilling operations in the Gulf of Mexico is misguided and should be rescinded. Absent that decision, strict, enforceable and transparent oversight must be the top priority.

In crafting new policies and regulations, my priority is ensuring that we do all we can to make sure another disaster of this magnitude does not occur ever again. Accordingly, I respectfully request your response to the following questions.

- Under your proposed division of MMS, why does the leasing function under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) – where environmental compliance takes place – remain within the royalty segment of the agency instead of a newly constituted environmental enforcement office?
- How will the newly proposed division of MMS affect industry behavior to prevent future disasters?
- Why did MMS regularly grant categorical exclusions (CEs) for exploratory drilling permits and other drilling actions to Deepwater Horizon and other rigs in the Outer Continental Shelf? Why did MMS issue at least twenty-seven (27) CEs in the Gulf of Mexico after the Deepwater Horizon explosion on April 22, 2010?

- What will MMS' future procedure be for granting CEs given that in the past, they were granted based on the premise that an accident at a given site was "unlikely?"
- What is the nature and scope of the Department of Interior's drilling moratorium? To what steps in the permitting and drilling process does it apply? Have exploratory drilling permits been issued by MMS after the moratorium was announced?
- What is the expected end date of the moratorium? If it is open-ended, what factors will be taken into consideration in deciding when to end or modify it?

I thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely, *Con Respects,*

Raúl M. Grijalva

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Member of Congress