Horizon platform has spewed tens of thousands of barrels of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico and Gulf Coast communities on a daily basis. The initial explosion killed eleven people, seriously injured seventeen others, and destroyed a multi-million dollar platform, but the extent of the damage done is far, far greater. The disaster and its aftermath have wrecked local industries and polluted or outright destroyed precious natural resources, and people are unable to work and to earn the money to pay for food, mortgages, and other basic expenses.

It is obvious that the existing body of law is antiquated and therefore inadequate to cope with the current situation. The liability caps under current law will allow the responsible parties to pay a mere fraction of the damages they have inflicted on the people of the Gulf, legislation enacted in the early part of the last century does not properly cover all the workers in the contemporary industry, and BP is nickel and diming the people its recklessness has put out of work.

Damage from the oil spill in the Gulf region will almost certainly total in the billions of dollars, but current law caps liability for damages at $75 million. While that seems like a huge number, it is less than 20 percent of the cost of the platform itself. My bill would establish a tiered liability system, so that the oil industry pays all the costs for cleanup and damages caused by the spills it creates, while still allowing independent operators to stay in business. This provision would be retroactive.

The REMEDIES Act will also make some needed changes to two 1920's era laws regarding injuries or death at sea. It will change the Jones Act so that the engineers and others who were killed or injured on the Deepwater Horizon, but who were not technically ''seamen,'' will be covered, and allow actions against anyone whose acts or omissions were a cause of those deaths or injuries.

My bill will also amend the Death on the High Seas Act, so that victims or their survivors will be able to receive compensation for their suffering, or the loss of their loved ones' companionship, rather than just the economic damages allowed under current law. It will also allow for punitive damages in cases involving gross negligence.

Of course, part of the cause of the explosion was the lax permitting processes. In 2008, the Minerals Management Service, MMS, and Department of the Interior changed regulations so that BP was not required to file a detailed blowout plan, and simply accepted BP's assertion that it was ''unlikely that an accidental surface or subsurface oil spill would occur from the proposed activities,'' and allowed the project to go forward. The REMEDIES bill will change that, requiring that operators file detailed spill mitigation and recovery plans, and detail their backup plans as well. Those plans would have to be vetted by impartial experts instead of simply rubber-stamped by industry insiders.

Under my bill the MMS will be allowed to suspend permits and cease operations when specific operators' safety records show that they are so focused on production that they risk the safety of their workers as well as the environment. Since 2007, BP had over 872 serious safety violations—a staggering 97 percent of the serious violations in the entire industry—at just two of their refineries.

BP is currently facing a criminal investigation for possible similar violations on the Deepwater Horizon platform, and new information strongly suggests that BP consistently made decisions that increased risk in order to save time or costs. While nobody wants to shut down such an important sector of our economy, it is important to make sure that the penalties for blatant disregard of our safety laws and regulations are strong enough to be taken seriously, rather than just paid as the cost of doing business. Making the continuation of production contingent on good safety records should be something BP and others commit to wholeheartedly. My bill imposes such requirements.

While there is now a $20 billion escrow account for third party claims against BP, administered by an independent third party, that took months to establish. Before that, the process BP had set up for the people of the Gulf Coast communities was a disgrace. BP's claims department engaged in a process in which people who are out of work because of the disaster on the Gulf Coast received some compensation, but by BP's own estimates, roughly twenty thousand of the forty thousand claims that have been filed had not been paid. The $5000 payment that most claimants have received was barely a drop in the bucket against the payments on loans for boats and other necessary equipment, and small business owners had frequently been given the runaround as to what exactly a ''legitimate'' claim was under BP's standards. Under my bill, the Secretary of Homeland Security will have the power to require businesses responsible for claims for oil spills to set up a more streamlined process, with guidelines for the proof necessary, so that legitimate claims are no longer delayed or denied.

In addition to the various provisions already identified, my bill will prevent unnecessary delays in the legal process for claims arising from this disaster. Under current class action law, BP and other defendants are allowed to have lawsuits brought against them by the states and municipalities it has harmed removed to Federal courts. While our federal judicial system is more than competent to handle these claims, it is also overloaded. By having cases filed in state courts removed to Federal court, defendants would be able to greatly and unfairly delay every step of the process, prolonging the damage their recklessness has caused and possibly pushing many to settle for less than they are fully entitled to. The REMEDIES Act will create a carve-out for cases brought by states and their subdivisions on behalf of their citizens, allowing them to remain in state courts and acted on quickly.

There has been overwhelming legislative action surrounding the oil spill by various Committees of this House with jurisdiction over this issue, including the Judiciary Committee of which I am a Member. I am an original co-sponsor of H.R. 5503, ''the Securing Protections for the Injured from Limitations on Liability Act,'' introduced by our distinguished Chairman JOHN CONYERS, and supported by Representative CHARLIE MELANCON. My bill adds a new dimension to the debate and to the evolving legislative process. In this regard, I plan to work closely with Members from both sides of the aisle to forge an effective legal response to address this crisis and to prevent similar disasters in the future, and ask my colleagues to join me in my efforts.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

U.S. EXPORT-IMPORT BANK DECISION KILLS 1,000 NEW JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the thing that people need across this Nation, from shore to shore today, more than anything else is jobs. Yet, the United States Export-Import Bank just recently made a decision that kills 1,000 new jobs. The recent U.S. Export-Import Bank denial of a loan guarantee to help finance the purchase of U.S.-made coal mining machinery by an Indian power company exposes the hypocrisy of the Obama administration and many in the environmental community.

According to its mission statement: ''The Export-Import Bank of the United States, known as Ex-Im Bank, is the official export credit agency of the United States with the mission to assist in financing the export of U.S. goods and services.'' Well, at least that's what it states.

The mined coal in India that the U.S.-manufactured machinery would have produced would be used for a new power plant in one of India's poorest regions.

A subsidiary of Reliance International Limited of India was to use the loan guarantee to buy $600 million worth of Wisconsin Bucyrus International mining machinery, which represents 1,000 U.S. jobs.

In a party-line vote of two Democrats to one Republican, the loan guarantee was turned down, not for economic reasons, but because it was contrary to the new White House policy of not funding ''projects with heavy carbon emissions,'' in this case a coal fired power plant.

One of the Democrat Members who voted against the loan said he was following President Obama's commitment to a clean energy future and voted against the loan because of the ''projected adverse environmental impact.''

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If the two Democrats who denied the loan were at all interested in the environmental impact, they would have voted for the loan. Likewise for the President, who should overturn this denial. The decision will not help the environment. In fact, it damages the environment, contributes to poverty, and instead of creating U.S. jobs, as the President promised, destroys at least 1,000 of the United States' jobs.

Forty percent of India's 1.15 billion people have no access to the power grid. That is 1½ times the population of the United States. India is estimated to have one-third of the world's poor.