

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

## **The President's Weekly Address**

*June 5, 2010*

I'm speaking to you from Caminada Bay in Grand Isle, Louisiana, one of the first places to feel the devastation wrought by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. While I was here, at Camardelle's Live Bait shop, I met with a group of local residents and small-business owners, folks like Floyd Lasseigne, a fourth-generation oyster fisherman. This is the time of year when he ordinarily earns a lot of his income, but his oyster bed along the north side of Grand Isle has likely been destroyed by the spill.

Terry Vegas has a similar story. He quit the eighth grade to become a shrimper with his grandfather. Ever since, he's earned his living during shrimping season, working long, grueling days so that he could earn enough money to support himself year round. But today, the waters where he's spent his years are closed. And every day, as the spill worsens, he loses hope that he'll be able to return to the life he built. "You can put a price on a lost season," he's said, "but not a lost heritage."

The effects of the spill reach beyond the shoreline. I spoke with Patti Rigaud. For 30 years, she's owned a small convenience store, a store opened by her father. She depends on the sales generated by tourism each summer. But this year, most of the boats that would line these docks are nowhere to be seen. Dudley Gaspard, who owns the Sand Dollar Marina and Hotel, has been hit hard as well. Normally this time of year, rooms are filling up and tackle is flying off the shelves. But he too has been devastated by the decline in tourism and the suspension of fishing in the waters off the Louisiana coast.

Their stories are familiar to many in Grand Isle and throughout the Gulf region. Often, families have been here for generations, earning a living and making a life that's tied to the water, that's tied to the magnificent coasts and the natural bounty of this place. Here, this spill has not just damaged livelihoods, it's upended whole communities. And the fury people feel is not just about the money they've lost. They've been through tough times before. It's about the wrenching recognition that this time their lives may never be the same.

These folks work hard. They meet their responsibilities. But now, because of a manmade catastrophe, one that's not their fault and beyond their control, their lives have been thrown into turmoil. It's brutally unfair. It's wrong. And what I told these men and women, and what I have said since the beginning of this disaster, is that I'm going to stand with the people of the Gulf Coast until they are made whole.

That's why from the beginning, we mobilized on every front to contain and clean up this spill. I've authorized the deployment of 17,000 National Guard troops to aid in the response. More than 20,000 people are currently working around the clock to protect waters and coastlines. We've convened hundreds of top scientists and engineers from around the world. More than 1,900 vessels are in the Gulf assisting in the cleanup. And more than 4.3 million feet of boom have been deployed, with another 2.9 million feet of boom available, enough to stretch over 1,300 miles. And 17 staging areas are in place across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to rapidly defend sensitive shorelines. In short, this is the largest response to an environmental disaster of its kind in the history of the country.

We've also ordered BP to pay economic injury claims, and we will make sure they pay every single dime owed to the people along the Gulf Coast. The Small Business Administration has stepped in to help businesses by approving loans and allowing deferrals of existing loan payments. And this week, the Federal Government sent BP a preliminary bill for \$69 million to pay back American taxpayers for some of the costs of the response so far.

In addition, after an emergency safety review, we're putting in place aggressive new operating standards for offshore drilling. And I've appointed a bipartisan Commission to look into the causes of this spill. If laws are inadequate, laws will be changed. If oversight was lacking, it will be strengthened. And if laws were broken, those responsible will be brought to justice.

Now, over the last few days, BP has placed a cap over the well, and it appears they're making some progress in trying to pump oil to the surface to keep it from leaking into the water. But as has been the case since the beginning of this crisis, we're prepared for the worst, even if we hope that BP's efforts bring better news than we've received before. We also know that regardless of the outcome of this attempt, there will still be some slippage [spillage]\* until the relief wells are completed. And there will continue to be a massive cleanup ahead of us.

These are hard times in Louisiana and across the Gulf Coast, an area that's seen more than its fair share of trouble. But what I've seen are communities absolutely determined to fight through this disaster as they have before, to preserve not just a way to make a living, but a way of life.

And we will fight alongside them, until the awful damage that has been done is reversed, people are back on their feet, and the great natural bounty of the Gulf Coast is restored.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on June 4 at Camardelle's Live Bait and Boiled Seafood in Grand, Isle, LA, for broadcast on June 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 4 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 5. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

*Locations:* Grand Isle, LA.

*Names:* Gaspard, Dudley A., Jr.; Lasseigne, Floyd; Rigaud, Patti W.; Vegas, Terry.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : National Guard; BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, National Commission on the; Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; Congress : Bipartisanship; Energy : British Petroleum; Energy : Offshore oil and gas drilling; Energy : Oil and gas industry, Federal regulations and oversight; Environment : Oil spills :: Corporate responsibility; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Economic effects and recovery efforts; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Environmental effects and cleanup efforts; Louisiana : President's visits; Small Business Administration : Disaster loan program.

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\* White House correction.