

Statement on the Resignation of Dennis F. Hightower as Deputy Secretary of Commerce
July 15, 2010

I thank Dennis for his service to the country and to my administration. I appreciate his guidance and hard work on various important priorities, from expanding broadband Internet access

across the country to reforming our export control system in a way that enhances our competitiveness and our security. I wish him the best in his future endeavors.

Remarks on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico and an Exchange With Reporters
July 16, 2010

The President. Good morning, everybody. I want to give everyone a quick update on the situation in the Gulf. As we all know, a new cap was fitted over the BP oil well earlier this week. And this larger, more sophisticated cap was designed to give us greater control over the oil flow as we complete the relief wells that are necessary to stop the leak.

Now, our scientists and outside experts have met through the night and continue this morning to analyze the data from the well integrity test. What they're working to determine is whether we can safely shut in the well using the new cap without creating new problems, including possibly countless new oil leaks in the sea floor.

Now, even if a shut-in is not possible, this new cap and the additional equipment being placed in the Gulf will be able to contain up to 80,000 barrels a day, which should allow us to capture nearly all the oil until the well is killed. It's important to remember that prior to the installation of this new cap, we were collecting on average about 25,000 barrels a day.

For almost 90 days of this environmental disaster, all of us have taken hope in the image of clean water instead of oil spewing in the Gulf. But it is our responsibility to make sure that we're taking a prudent course of action and not simply looking for a short-term solution that could lead to even greater problems down the road.

So to summarize, the new cap is good news. Either we will be able to use it to stop the flow, or we will be able to use it to capture almost all

of the oil until the relief well is done. But we're not going to know for certain which approach makes sense until additional data is in. And all the American people should rest assured that all of these decisions will be based on the science and what's best for the people of the Gulf.

All right? I'll take just one or two questions. Go ahead.

Minor Earthquake in the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area

Q. Did you feel the earthquake, Mr. President?

The President. I didn't.

Status of Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Q. Sir, do you think this means that basically we're turning the corner, at least, in the Gulf? Tell the American people what you anticipate in the next few weeks ahead, because they're still very anxious about this.

The President. Well, I think it's important that we don't get ahead of ourselves here. One of the problems with having this camera down there is, is that when the oil stops gushing, everybody feels like we're done, and we're not. The new cap is containing the oil right now, but scientists are doing a number of tests. What they want to make sure of is, is that by putting this cap on, the oil isn't seeping out elsewhere in ways that could be even more catastrophic. And that involves measuring pressures while

this cap is on. The data is not all still in, and it has to be interpreted by the scientists.

But here's the good news that I think everybody needs to understand: Even if it turns out that we can't maintain this cap and completely shut off the flow of oil, what the new cap allows us to do is to essentially attach many more containment mechanisms so that we're able to take more oil up to the surface, put it on ships; it won't be spilling into the Gulf.

The final solution to this whole problem is going to be the relief wells and getting that completed, but there's no doubt that we have made progress as a consequence of this new cap fitting on, and that even if it turns out that we can't keep the containment cap on to completely stop the oil, it's going to allow us to capture much more oil and we'll see less oil flowing into the Gulf.

Now, in the meantime, obviously we've still got a big job to do. There's still a lot of oil out there, and that's why we've got more skimmers out there, there's better coordination on the ground along the shorelines. There's still going to be an enormous cleanup job to do, and there's still going to be the whole set of issues of—surrounding making sure people are compensated properly, that the \$20 billion fund is set up and is acting expeditiously.

So we've got an enormous amount of work to do, and people down in the Gulf, particularly businesses, are still suffering as a consequence of this disaster. But we are making steady progress, and I think the American people should take some heart in the fact that we're making progress on this front.

Drilling of Relief Wells

Q. Are the relief wells still on target, sir?

The President. So far, it's actually slightly ahead of target, but the problem on the relief well is not simply drilling all the way down, it's also connecting it up, and that's a delicate operation that could take some time.

BP p.l.c. Cleanup Costs/Compensation for Gulf Coast Communities Affected by the Oil Spill

Q. Ahead of target—what does ahead of target mean, sir?

Q. Mr. President, when does BP begin paying fines according to the amount of oil spilled?

The President. Well, we are obviously going to be taking measures about how much oil has spilled, and those are calculations that are going to be continually refined. BP is going to be paying for the damage that it has caused, and that's going to involve not only paying for the environmental disaster and cleanup, but also compensating people who've been affected.

Yes, go ahead.

Q. On a per-barrel basis?

The President. That's going to be a component of the calculations that are made.

Go ahead.

President's Travel to the Gulf Coast/Oil Spill Relief Efforts/Status of Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Q. What do you want to say to the people there? When do you expect to go down next?

The President. Well, I would expect that sometime in the next several weeks I'll be back down. What we're trying to do right now is to make sure that the technical folks on the ground are making the best possible decisions to shut this well down as quickly as possible, that we're standing up the fund so that people are compensated quickly. I'm staying in touch each and every day, monitoring the progress and getting briefed by the scientists.

The key here right now is for us to make decisions based on science, based on what's best for the people of the Gulf, not based on PR, not based on politics. And that's part of the reason why I wanted to speak this morning, because I know that there were a lot of reports coming out in the media that seemed to indicate, well, maybe this thing is done. We won't be done until we actually know that we've killed the well and that we have a permanent solution in place. We're moving in that direction, but I don't want us to get too far ahead of ourselves.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Zahedan, Iran

July 16, 2010

I strongly condemn the outrageous terrorist attacks on a mosque in southeast Iran. The murder of innocent civilians in their place of worship is an intolerable offense, and those who carried it out must be held accountable. The United States stands with the families and loved

ones of those killed and injured, and with the Iranian people, in the face of this injustice. Together, the people of the world must condemn and oppose all forms of terrorism and support the universal right of human beings to live free from fear and senseless violence.

The President's Weekly Address

July 17, 2010

This week, many of our largest corporations reported robust earnings, a positive sign of growth. But too many of our small-business owners and those who aspire to start their own small businesses continue to struggle, in part because they can't get the credit they need to start up, grow, and hire. And too many Americans whose livelihoods have fallen prey to the worst recession in our lifetimes, a recession that cost our economy 8 million jobs, still wonder how they'll make ends meet. That's why we need to take new, commonsense steps to help small businesses, grow our economy, and create jobs. And we need to take them now.

For months, that's what we've been trying to do. But too often, the Republican leadership in the United States Senate chooses to filibuster our recovery and obstruct our progress. And that has very real consequences.

Consider what this obstruction means for our small businesses, the growth engines that create two of every three new jobs in this country. A lot of small businesses still have trouble getting the loans and capital they need to keep their doors open and hire new workers. So we proposed steps to get them that help: eliminating capital gains taxes on investments, establishing a fund for small lenders to help small businesses, enhancing successful SBA programs that help them access the capital they need. But again and again, a partisan minority in the Senate said no and used procedural tactics to block a simple up-or-down vote.

Think about what these stalling tactics mean for the millions of Americans who've lost their

jobs since the recession began. Over the past several weeks, more than 2 million of them have seen their unemployment insurance expire. For many, it was the only way to make ends meet while searching for work, the only way to cover rent, utilities, even food.

Three times, the Senate has tried to temporarily extend that emergency assistance. And three times, a minority of Senators—basically the same crowd who said no to small businesses—said no to folks looking for work and blocked a straight up-or-down vote.

Some Republican leaders actually treat this unemployment insurance as if it's a form of welfare. They say it discourages folks from looking for work. Well, I've met a lot of folks looking for work these past few years, and I can tell you, I haven't met any American who would rather have an unemployment check than a meaningful job that lets you provide for your family. And we all have friends or neighbors or family members who already know how hard it is to land a job when five workers are competing for every opening.

Now, in the past, Presidents and Congresses of both parties have treated unemployment insurance for what it is, an emergency expenditure. That's because an economic disaster can devastate families and communities just as surely as a flood or tornado.

But suddenly, Republican leaders want to change that. They say we shouldn't provide unemployment insurance because it costs money. So after years of championing policies that turned a record surplus into a massive deficit,