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5/27/10

Mr. Chairman and other Representatives of the committee, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell our story. My name is Byron Encalade and I am 3rd Generation Oyster Fisherman from East Pointe A'La Hache, LA. I currently serve as President of both the Louisiana Oysterman Association and the South Plaquemines United Fisheries Cooperative.

Pointe A'La Hache is a small fishing village in Plaquemines Parish, LA with an approximately 300 people. It's primarily African American with Seafood being its primary industry.

Our family fisheries engage in harvesting oysters and shrimp, which we transport across all Gulf Coast states. As the President of our family fisheries and trucking company I employ eight people: my brother, two nephews and five cousins.

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Black oyster fishermen have not been able to amass wealth to sustain our community; therefore, occurrences such as Hurricane Katrina and the Oil Spill have caused distress and uncertainty for this already underserved community. We thought 2010 was the year to finally recover from Hurricane Katrina. We have invested monies in our boats and company infrastructure. This oil spill has will be devastating for Pointe A'La Hache, but it will be extremely difficult these next few months for fisherman who depended on this livelihood as source of income and also a food source.

Once again we find ourselves crippled by a disaster we did not create. And as in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season, it has been said that the total clean up and recovery will take months if not years to complete. On the eve of the 2010 hurricane season, which may only make this problem worse, I can tell you: We do not have that kind of time. We need your help!

We need Congressional Oversight on the funds distributed by BP and the Federal government. We in Louisiana have learned hard lessons about the need for transparency in recovery and call upon this committee to closely monitor the recovery activities.

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Louisiana is the No. 1 provider of shrimp, oysters, crab and crawfish in the United States, providing about a third of the seafood consumed in nation and \$2.4 billion a year to the state economy.

Our request is as follows:

The federal government ensures immediate compensation is paid to fisherman, to provide for income replacement and family livings expenses. The lack of federal or state income returns must not preclude any fisherman, from receiving compensation. The claims compensation protocol must include:

- 1. A system for classification of claimants**
- 2. Immediate compensation for six (6) months of lost income that is equivalent to at least an annual income of \$24,000. Fishermen who can substantiate higher annual income from fishing will receive higher payments.**
- 3. In 6 months(November 2010) a sum equal to one half of one year's lost earnings (and no less than \$12,000 per worker) shall be paid to every fisherman remaining out of work as a result of this disaster.**
- 4. Within 12 months of the initial payment the Federal government must make a final assessment of full damages for the lost earnings to be made to fishermen. This determination should include evaluation of other long term losses beyond loss of earnings such as damage to boats and equipment, damage to oyster beds and fishing grounds and other long term losses.**