

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2010

Admiral Thad W. Allen
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, DC 20593

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Admiral Allen, Secretary Napolitano, and Secretary Locke:

As United States Senators representing coastal states along the Atlantic seaboard, we are keeping close watch on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, not only so we can help the residents of that region, but also to assess whether the oil and chemical dispersants might affect the beaches and fisheries in our home states. Some widely-viewed but unofficial projections indicate that parts of the spill could get caught in the Loop Current, which would bring the oil up along the East Coast. This outcome is less than a certainty – it may even be highly unlikely. Nevertheless, we have spoken with residents in our coastal communities who are concerned about the oil and chemical dispersants, and these communities should at the very least be fully prepared for the worst case scenario.

To this end, we want the federal government to proactively work to ensure coastal states along the Atlantic seaboard are prepared and to ensure that the public and local governments are given the best science-based information about where the spill might be headed. Specifically, we have two requests:

- We ask that the Department of Homeland Security immediately begin coordinating with all state emergency preparedness agencies along the Atlantic Coast, providing full information about how best to prepare for managing an oil spill and ensuring that these states are properly equipped for the worst-case scenario.
- We ask that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration begin developing and disseminating official, science-based predictions about the long-term direction of the oil spill and chemical dispersants, that NOAA make frequent updates to these projections

and that they be publicly available. We appreciate the current projections NOAA develops and posts on its website, but these estimates are limited to a 72-hour period. We fully understand that projecting the spill's direction weeks or months in advance is extremely difficult, but it would be helpful to know the statistical probabilities of oil hitting various Atlantic Coast locations.

Our states' beaches are fully open for the summer season, and at this time, the oil spill does not pose an imminent threat to them. However, the health of our shores is too important to be left to chance – not only are they natural treasures, but they are also how many families in our coastal communities earn a living. They add billions of dollars to our states' economies, support millions of jobs and bring enjoyment to millions more families from nearby and across the nation. If there is any real risk to these communities from a spill that right now remains thousands of miles away, we need to know as soon as possible. Furthermore, our state agencies that will partner with federal agencies to protect our shores need to be fully prepared with the information and equipment needed to combat the worst case scenario. Such an effort should begin immediately. Thank you for your hard work to protect the Gulf Coast, and we look forward to collaborating with you.

Sincerely,


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



BARBARA MIKULSKI
United States Senator



KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senator


JIM WEBB
United States Senator


RICHARD BURR
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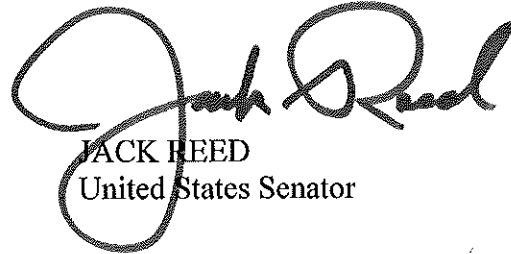
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
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KAY HAGAN
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