

## OPENING STATEMENT

**The Honorable Andy Harris (R-MD), Chairman**  
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
*Offshore Drilling Safety and Response Technologies*

Wednesday April 6, 2011

The title of today's hearing is Offshore Drilling Safety and Response Technologies. The context under which we review this issue is framed by complex and interrelated environmental, economic, and even geopolitical policy concerns. Looming large of course is the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, of which we are still assessing its root causes and environmental impacts as we approach the one year anniversary of the disaster. Meanwhile, American families are being hit hard at the gas pump due to multiple market factors headlined by tight supplies, rising global demand for oil, growing political instability in North Africa and the Middle East, and decreasing American production.

The current national average price for a gallon of gas is \$3.60—the highest ever for this time of the year. This of course effectively amounts to a tax increase on consumers and a drag on our economic recovery. Accordingly, I believe we must attack the energy problem from every angle we can, and expanding domestic oil and natural gas supply and production absolutely must be part of this equation.

Offshore drilling holds incredible promise to help deliver on this goal. The Federal government currently estimates the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf holds 85 billion barrels of technically recoverable oil (over half of which is in the Gulf of Mexico) and 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

We must pursue exploration and production of these valuable resources. But we all realize we must do it safely and be prepared with effective well containment and response if an accident does occur.

To this end, through this hearing we aim to examine the status of safety-related drilling and response technologies and standards, with an emphasis on progress made since last year's accident. We also want to hear how best to structure and prioritize Federal programs in these areas, particularly those at the Department of Energy but also interagency response efforts authorized by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

We all know it is impossible to completely eliminate risks associated with complex endeavors such as deepwater drilling, but we must continually work to reduce risks and to manage them in a way that allows our economy and American consumers to benefit from our vast supply of domestic offshore oil and gas resources.

I yield back, and now recognize Ranking Member Miller for his opening statement.