

Support H.R. 5503, the SPILL Act
June 29, 2010

Dear Colleague:

We write to urge you to support H.R. 5503, the “Securing Protections for the Injured from Limitations on Liability Act,” which we expect to be on the floor under suspension tomorrow. We also want to alert you to two important changes in the bill.

On June 28, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce wrote that they opposed Section 5 of the bill. **The provision of the bill that the Chamber objected to has been deleted in its entirety.**

On June 28, the Judicial Conference of the United States expressed concerns about Section 6 of the bill. **The provision of the bill that the Judicial Conference objected to has been deleted in its entirety.** With this change, the Judicial Conference does not oppose the bill.

What remains are the core provisions that are needed to help the victims of the Gulf Coast oil spill disaster, including the families of the eleven men who died and the numerous workers who were injured aboard the Deepwater Horizon. This bill would revise outdated laws, some dating back to the 1850's, to ensure that the victims of the oil spill are fully compensated by the irresponsible corporations that caused it. We would urge Members to remember that **this bill is, above all else, about helping victims, particularly the victims of the oil spill.**

One of these victims is Gordon Jones, who was killed aboard the Deepwater Horizon. Gordon was married to Michelle Jones and had two children, Stafford and Maxwell Gordon, and is also survived by his brother and father. Maxwell Gordon was born just a couple of weeks after his father's death on April 20, 2010. Under current law, the Jones family can only recover Gordon's lost wages, and are not entitled to any non-financial damages. This bill would fix that for Gordon, the 10

others killed on the Deepwater Horizon, and others injured. As Gordon's father, Keith, testified before the House Judiciary Committee on May 27:

“You may note that I haven't mentioned how much Gordon made. There's a reason for that. The loss of Gordon's income is the last thing Michelle grieves for. When Michelle tells her boys about their dad, she's not going to show them a pay stub. She will tell them how much their father loved them, how much he loved to play with Stafford. She'll tell them how much he loved her and what a happy marriage they had. When they're old enough she'll tell them how funny their father was and how much his friends loved to be with him. When they're older still she will explain how and why their father died. But she won't console her sons by telling them how much money their dad earned. And as I understand the present state of the law, that's all Michelle and her two sons can recover from those responsible for Gordon's death.

I want to say how offensive it is when the law recognizes only pecuniary loss in cases like these eleven deaths . . . Please believe me; no amount of money can ever compensate us for Gordon's death. We know that. But this is the only means available to begin to make things right.”

In our view, this is not a complicated vote for Members. It is about ensuring that BP and other corporations that caused the Deepwater Horizon explosion and resulting oil spill are held accountable under the law for all the harm their irresponsible behavior has caused these hardworking Americans and their families. We are attaching a letter from some of the families of those who died aboard the Deepwater Horizon in strong support of this legislation.

If you have questions or would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Eric Tamarkin on the House Judiciary Committee staff at

5-3951. For additional information, please see the Judiciary
Committee's Web site at
http://judiciary.house.gov/issues/issues_Gulfspill.html.

Sincerely,

/s/

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress