

**Statement of
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Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Land and
Minerals Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
For the Oversight Hearing On:
“Investigation of President Obama’s Gulf Drilling Moratorium: Questioning of Key
Department of the Interior Officials.”**

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Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey and Members of the Committee, my name is Mary Katherine Ishee, and I currently serve as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior (Department). I am here today at the request of the Committee to provide testimony related to the May 27, 2010, Department report entitled, “Increased Safety Measures for Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf” (Safety Measures Report or Report). The Committee has requested that I be specifically prepared to give testimony regarding my role in the development, review and editing of the Safety Measures Report, how the moratorium decision in the Report was made, the editing of peer review language in the Report, and activities of the Office of Inspector General.

During the time in question, I served as a Deputy Director for the then-Minerals Management Service (MMS).

Approximately 12 weeks after I began at MMS, the *Deepwater Horizon* explosion and oil spill occurred. This national crisis necessitated an “all-hands-on-deck” approach from staff in MMS, as well as throughout much of the Department and indeed the Federal government. The response to the spill placed extraordinary demands on the agency. In addition to working to monitor the blowout and oil spill, and helping to determine methods to contain it, agency staff also worked to respond to the enormous number of requests being made for technical and policy information, background data, and briefings. Interest in the crisis was intense, from both domestic and international media, Congress, other Federal agencies, state and local governments and members of the public.

In late April, the President directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare the Report. Preparation of the Report was led by the Office of the Secretary, with assistance from staff at MMS and with input from various other agencies and entities both within and outside the Department. These efforts commanded a broad, coordinated and concerted response from the Department and throughout the Federal government under compressed timelines and amid competing priorities and evolving challenges.

I was asked by the Director of MMS to oversee MMS's involvement in the development of the Report, in coordination with the Office of the Secretary. Because MMS had the expertise critical to developing technical measures, the chapters of the Report dealing specifically with the technical safety recommendations were the primary focus of MMS staff.

I understand that the Department is successfully implementing most of the safety recommendations from the Report through rulemakings and other means. These measures have led to the development of technologies and practices that are improving the safety of offshore oil and gas development, and enhancing the government's response capabilities in the Gulf and elsewhere on the Outer Continental Shelf.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer questions from the Committee.