

**Statement of
Neal Kemkar
Special Assistant, Office of the Secretary U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
For the Oversight Hearing On:
"Committee Oversight of Department of the Interior: Questioning of Key Department of
the Interior Officials"**

September 13, 2012

Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey, and Members of the Committee, my name is Neal Kemkar and I currently serve in the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department). I appear here today at the request of the Committee.

I joined the Department in April 2009 as a special assistant to Steve Black, Counselor to the Secretary. In this capacity, my role includes assisting the Counselor in advancing Secretary Salazar's and the Administration's commitment to responsibly develop energy on our nation's public lands and offshore waters.

On April 20, 2010, the explosion and sinking of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico killed eleven workers and resulted in the largest oil spill in U.S. history. Over the course of the next six months, the Administration's response to the oil spill commanded an extraordinary amount of the Department's time and resources. Administration officials worked tirelessly with experts from the government, academia, and industry in a wide-reaching effort to conduct an extensive investigation into the Deepwater Horizon disaster and to respond quickly and thoroughly to this national emergency.

As part of this response, on April 30, 2010, the President directed Secretary Salazar to prepare, within 30 days, a report evaluating what, if any, additional steps could be taken to improve the safety of oil and gas exploration on the outer continental shelf. That report came to be titled *Increased Safety Measures for Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf*. At my supervisor's request, I joined this effort and assisted an exceptionally dedicated team in developing the report over the next thirty days.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.