

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 26, 2012

Mr. John G. Hoffman
Chief Executive Officer and President
Black Elk Energy, LLC
11451 Katy Freeway
Suite 500
Houston, TX 77079

Dear Mr. Hoffman:

We are writing regarding the explosion on November 16, 2012, on one of your oil production platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.¹ Two workers are dead, another is missing, and several others were seriously injured. The environmental ramifications of the explosion are unclear at this point. The explosion came only one day after BP entered into a \$4 billion criminal settlement with the Department of Justice for its role in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster.

The safety of offshore drilling has been an important issue for the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Natural Resources. In the 111th Congress, our Committees led an investigation into the root causes of the Deepwater Horizon incident. The Energy and Commerce Committee produced bipartisan legislation to establish new federal regulatory requirements to prevent future spills from offshore oil and gas wells. This bill was reported by the Committee on Energy and Commerce by a bipartisan vote of 48 to 0, with one abstention, on July 15, 2010. Key elements of this bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives on July 30, 2010, as part of H.R. 3534, the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act, that was reported out of the Natural Resources Committee by a 27-21 vote on July 15, 2010. The CLEAR Act was approved by the House by a 209-193 vote on July 30, 2010. However, the bill was blocked in the Senate and Congress has still not acted to improve the safety of offshore drilling following the BP spill.

Building on the CLEAR Act, Democrats have introduced legislation in the House in this Congress, H.R. 501, to implement the recommendations of the independent National Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. However, the House Republican Leadership has failed to take action on this legislation to improve the safety of offshore drilling.

¹ *Body Believed to Be Missing Worker Found Near Site of Oil Rig Blast*, ABCNews.com (Nov. 18, 2012).

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In order to better understand how and why this incident occurred, we ask that you provide our staff with a briefing on the explosion, its possible causes, and any remedial efforts your company intends to take as a response to this incident. We understand that you are currently focused on responding to this emergency but would appreciate your assistance in scheduling this briefing by December 10, 2012. Please contact Tiffany Benjamin with our staff at (202) 226-3400 to schedule this briefing.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and
Commerce



Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee



Bobby L. Rush
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and
Power
Committee on Energy and
Commerce



Rush D. Holt, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and
Mineral Resources
Natural Resources Committee



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations
Committee on Energy and
Commerce