

The White House

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Weekly Address: President Obama Establishes Bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling

Names Former Two-Term Florida Governor and Former Senator Bob Graham and Former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency William K. Reilly as Commission Co-Chairs

WASHINGTON – In this week’s address, President Obama announced that he has signed an executive order establishing the bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling with former two-term Florida Governor and former Senator Bob Graham and former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency William K. Reilly serving as co-chairs.

The bipartisan **National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling** is tasked with providing recommendations on how we can prevent – and mitigate the impact of – any future spills that result from offshore drilling.

- The commission will be focused on the necessary environmental and safety precautions we must build into our regulatory framework in order to ensure an accident like this never happens again, taking into account the other investigations concerning the causes of the spill.
- The commission will have bipartisan co-chairs with a total membership of seven people. Membership will include broad and diverse representation of individuals with relevant expertise. No sitting government employees or elected officials will sit on the commission.
- The Commission’s work will be transparent and subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Commission will issue a report within six months of having been convened.

President Obama named the following individuals as Co-Chairs of National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling:

Senator Bob Graham is the former two-term governor of Florida and served for 18 years in the United States Senate. Senator Graham is recognized for his leadership on issues ranging from healthcare and environmental preservation to his ten years of service on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence — including eighteen months as chairman in 2001–2002. After retiring from public life in January 2005, Senator Graham served for a year as a senior fellow at

the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. From May 2008 to February 2010, he served as Chairman of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism whose mandate was to build on the work of the 9/11 Commission. Senator Graham was also appointed to serve as a Commissioner on the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, established by Congress to examine the global and domestic causes of the recent financial crisis. The Commission will provide its findings and conclusions in a final report due to Congress on December 15, 2010. He also serves as a member of the CIA External Advisory Board and the chair of the Board of Overseers of the Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida. Senator Graham has been recognized by national and Florida organizations for his public service including The Woodrow Wilson Institute award for Public Service, The National Park Trust Public Service award and The Everglades Coalition Hall of Fame. Senator Graham earned a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Florida and an LLB from Harvard Law School. He is the recipient of an honorary doctorate of public service from his alma mater, the University of Florida, and honorary doctorates from Pomona College and Nova Southeastern University.

William K. Reilly is a Founding Partner of Aqua International Partners, LP, a private equity fund dedicated to investing in companies engaged in water and renewable energy, and a Senior Advisor to TPG Capital, LP, an international investment partnership. Mr. Reilly served as the first Payne Visiting Professor at Stanford University (1993-1994), Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1989-1993), president of the World Wildlife Fund (1985-1989), president of The Conservation Foundation (1973-1989), and director of the Rockefeller Task Force on Land Use and Urban Growth from (1972-1973). He also served as the head of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Earth Summit at Rio in 1992. Mr. Reilly is Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the World Wildlife Fund, Co-Chair of the National Commission on Energy Policy, Chairman of the Board of the ClimateWorks Foundation, Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions at Duke University, and a Director of the Packard Foundation and the National Geographic Society and a member of Gov. Schwarzenegger's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force. He also serves on the Board of Directors of DuPont, ConocoPhillips, Royal Caribbean International and Energy Future Holdings, for which he serves as Chairman of the Sustainable Energy Advisory Board. In 2007 Mr. Reilly was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He holds a B.A. degree from Yale, J.D. from Harvard and M.S. in Urban Planning from Columbia University.

The full audio of the address is [HERE](#). The video can be viewed online at www.whitehouse.gov.

Remarks of President Barack Obama

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Weekly Address

Washington, DC

One month ago this week, BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded off Louisiana's coast, killing 11 people and rupturing an underwater pipe. The resulting oil spill has not only dealt an economic blow to Americans across the Gulf Coast, it also represents an environmental disaster.

In response, we are drawing on America's best minds and using the world's best technology to stop the leak. We've deployed over 1,100 vessels, about 24,000 personnel, and more than 2 million total feet of boom to help contain it. And we're doing all we can to assist struggling fishermen, and the small businesses and communities that depend on them.

Folks on the Gulf Coast – and across America – are rightly demanding swift action to clean up BP's mess and end this ordeal. But they're also demanding to know how this happened in the first place, and how we can make sure it never happens again. That's what I'd like to spend a few minutes talking with you about.

First and foremost, what led to this disaster was a breakdown of responsibility on the part of BP and perhaps others, including Transocean and Halliburton. And we will continue to hold the relevant companies accountable not only for being forthcoming and transparent about the facts surrounding the leak, but for shutting it down, repairing the damage it does, and repaying Americans who've suffered a financial loss.

But even as we continue to hold BP accountable, we also need to hold Washington accountable. Now, this catastrophe is unprecedented in its nature, and it presents a host of new challenges we are working to address. But the question is what lessons we can learn from this disaster to make sure it never happens again.

If the laws on our books are inadequate to prevent such an oil spill, or if we didn't enforce those laws – I want to know it. I want to know what worked and what didn't work in our response to the disaster, and where oversight of the oil and gas industry broke down. We know, for example, that a cozy relationship between oil and gas companies and agencies that regulate them has long been a source of concern.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has taken steps to address this problem; steps that build on reforms he has been implementing since he took office. But we need to do a lot more to protect the health and safety of our people; to safeguard the quality of our air and water; and to preserve the natural beauty and bounty of America.

In recent weeks, we've taken a number of immediate measures to prevent another spill. We've ordered inspections of all deepwater operations in the Gulf of Mexico. We've announced that no permits for drilling new wells will go forward until the 30-day safety and environmental review I requested is complete. And I've called on Congress to pass a bill that would provide critical funds and tools to respond to this spill and better prepare us to confront any future spills.

But we also need to take a comprehensive look at how the oil and gas industry operates and how we regulate them. That is why, on Friday, I signed an executive order establishing the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. While there are a number of ongoing investigations, including an independent review by the National Academy of Engineering, the purpose of this Commission is to consider both the root causes of the disaster and offer options on what safety and environmental precautions we need to take to prevent a similar disaster from happening again. This Commission, I'd note, is similar to one proposed by Congresswoman Capps and Senator Whitehouse.

I've asked Democrat Bob Graham and Republican Bill Reilly to co-chair this Commission. Bob served two terms as Florida's governor, and represented Florida as a United States Senator for almost two decades. During that time, he earned a reputation as a champion of the environment, leading the most extensive environmental protection effort in the state's history.

Bill Reilly is chairman emeritus of the board of the World Wildlife Fund, and he is also deeply knowledgeable about the oil and gas industry. During the presidency of George H.W. Bush, Bill was Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and his tenure encompassed the Exxon Valdez disaster.

I can't think of two people who will bring greater experience or better judgment to the task at hand. In the days to come, I'll appoint 5 other distinguished Americans – including scientists, engineers, and environmental advocates – to join them on the Commission. And I'm directing them to report back in 6 months with recommendations on how we can prevent – and mitigate the impact of – any future spills that result from offshore drilling.

One of the reasons I ran for President was to put America on the path to energy independence, and I have not wavered from that commitment. To achieve that goal, we must pursue clean energy and energy efficiency, and we've taken significant steps to do so. And we must also pursue domestic sources of oil and gas. Because it represents 30 percent of our oil production, the Gulf of Mexico can play an important part in securing our energy future. But we can only pursue offshore oil drilling if we have assurances that a disaster like the BP oil spill will not happen again. This Commission will, I hope, help provide those assurances so we can continue to seek a secure energy future for the United States of America.

Thanks so much.