

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Passes Legislation to Retroactively Raise Oil Liability Limit

Washington – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today issued the following statement after the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure passed the “Oil Spill Accountability and Environmental Protection Act” legislation that would, among other things, remove the existing limit on liability for oil companies. The bill draws on Holt’s Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act to ensure that BP and other oil companies are held accountable for paying economic damages resulting from spills.

While the responsible party in an oil spill currently must pay for all clean-up costs, currently there is a \$75 million cap on its liability for economic damages, including lost business revenues from fishing and tourism, natural resources damages, or lost local tax revenues. Like Holt’s bill, the bill passed in Committee would raise the cap retroactively.

“BP should be liable for every last cent of the damages it caused - not the small business owner, not the restaurateur, not the vacation home renter, not the fisherman, not the American taxpayer. Raising the cap is about ensuring that BP is on the hook – by law and by fact,” Holt said.

He added: “Now that the Committee has acted, I hope the full House soon will vote on raising the liability cap and applying it retroactively to BP. It will be an interesting test: do members stand with taxpayers or do they stand with oil companies? Will they share my view that raising the cap is an issue of fairness or will they see it as a “shakedown” of oil companies, as the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce might say.”