

First bill introduced as a new senior Democrat of the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Washington – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), the new senior Democrat on the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, today reintroduced the Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act to ensure that BP and other oil companies are held accountable for paying all economic damages resulting from oil spills. Last year, the House incorporated part of Holt's bill into the CLEAR Act – its response to the Gulf spill – but the bill stalled in the Senate. The Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act would lift the liability cap, currently set at \$75 million, for losses related to a spill including lost business revenues from fishing and tourism, natural resources damages, or lost local tax revenues. The bill would ensure that Big Oil – and not the American taxpayer – is responsible for all the true costs associated with an oil spill.

Recently, the bipartisan presidential commission on the spill – the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling – found that the current liability cap “limits liability well below levels that might actually be incurred” and “distorts the incentives of industry participants to adopt cost-effective safety precautions.”

“While some breathed a sigh of relief when BP established a \$20 billion escrow account to compensate individuals and businesses for the damages inflicted by the spill, the fact is that the \$75 million liability cap remains a laughable amount,” Holt said. “When the next spill occurs – and it's a matter of when, not if – there is no guarantee that the next oil company can or will cover all damages. We shouldn't wait for that spill to occur to make the necessary legal changes to ensure that companies like BP pay for every last cent of the mess they made.”

On Tuesday, Holt – who first joined the Committee on Natural Resources in 1999, his first year in Congress – was named the senior Democrat of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. In that position Holt will work with his colleagues on much needed reforms to the oil and gas industry practices in the United States as well as work to develop a sustainable, environmentally sound energy future. Before coming to Congress, Holt was an energy scientist who spent nearly a decade working at one of the nation's premier alternative energy research labs.

“Throughout my career, I have worked to help craft a strategy that will provide real energy security for residents of the United States. We can and should take a thoughtful, fact-based approach to develop a long-term energy strategy to decrease our dependence on fossil fuels and protect our environment for future generations. I look forward to advancing a responsible energy policy as the senior Democrat on this important Subcommittee,” Holt said.

“Rep. Holt's bill to make the liability limit for oil companies unlimited is the right way to hold the

industry responsible for their spills, and to deter them from engaging in risky practices,” said Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), the Ranking Member of the Natural Resources Committee. “That’s why this same language is included in the bill House Democrats are introducing today to implement the recommendations of the BP spill commission. It is this kind of leadership that will make Rep. Holt a vital and effective leader of the Energy and Mineral Subcommittee Democrats.”

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