

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 12, 2010

The Honorable Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

As you know, the *Deepwater Horizon* accident has had a profound impact on the economic viability of many of Louisiana's businesses. From shrimpers and oystermen to restaurants, processing plants, and shipping companies, a significant portion of Louisiana's businesses rely on the Gulf of Mexico for their livelihoods. With thousands of barrels of oil spewing into the Gulf every day, it is critical that we make use of every tool at our disposal to aid in the recovery efforts and ensure that even more businesses, especially small businesses, are not adversely affected by the spill.

While we are grateful for the Department of Commerce's efforts to assist in the cleanup and recovery efforts thus far, we would encourage you to review several additional measures that would benefit impacted businesses. One proposal that could have an immediate impact is to temporarily waive or reduce the fees associated with Department of Commerce export assistance programs, including the Gold Key service, International Partner Search, International Company Profile, and the Featured U.S. Exporter programs. A similar initiative was enacted by the International Trade Administration as part of the recovery efforts after the 2005 hurricanes with much success. As a direct result of the reduced fees, a significant number of businesses took advantage of the programs helping to put people back to work while also spurring long term economic development. In fact, since 2005 exports from Louisiana have increased by almost 69 percent, the fourth highest rate of growth in the nation.

Additionally, we believe that the Department of Commerce can play a key role in helping the Gulf Coast's tourism-related businesses weather this latest disaster. In the four states that have been most impacted by the accident—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida—over \$94 billion is spent annually on tourism-related activities, directly employing more than one million residents. Accordingly, we would encourage you to coordinate closely with local partners on international press and travel trade familiarization tours. These types of activities were extremely successful following the 2005 hurricanes, resulting in exposure to more than 1.3 million readers through both online and print articles. As you develop these initiatives, please pay special attention to regional, state, and local efforts which market cultural and heritage destinations in Louisiana as well as the Gulf Coast at large.


Further, as the Department of Commerce works to implement provisions from the Travel Promotion Act, we encourage you to consider Louisiana as a host location for any

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implementation meetings or other associated activities. Doing so would further highlight the many tourism related destinations and attractions in our state, sending a strong signal to prospective visitors that Louisiana and the Gulf Coast remain open for business. Lastly, the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries serves as an important research and development tool for promoting international travel to the United States. At the appropriate time, we respectfully request that the Office conduct a study and report on the impact of the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster on Gulf Coast tourism, how tourism is recovering, and any international marketing opportunities for Gulf Coast destinations.

In closing, we reiterate our appreciation and gratitude for the steps that you and others in the Administration have taken to relieve the burden for Gulf Coast businesses and especially for our small businesses. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly if we can be of assistance to the Department of Commerce's efforts to respond to this disaster. If have any questions regarding this particular request, please contact John High of Senator Landrieu's staff at (202) 224-5175 or Carl Baloney of Congressman Melancon's staff at (202) 225-4031.

Sincerely,


Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator


Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Francisco J. "Frank" Sanchez, Under Secretary for International Trade,
U.S. Department of Commerce