U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

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African American

Huge Oil Mess Will Test Lisa Jackson (*Black America Web*)

Date: Wednesday, May 5, 2010
By:

The recent explosion of a British Petroleum oil rig 50 miles off the Louisiana coast is terrible news for lovers of nature, of commerce, and of a decent standard of living.

The damaged rig has spilled more than 1.6 million gallons of “black gold” into the gulf, by Coast Guard estimates. And, unless the spewing valve is plugged – and that is something no one seems sure of how to do or, for that matter, if it can be done at all – BP could lose the entire well head, leaking 100,000 barrels or more a day.

The story is being covered, but does not seem to have captured the public fascination.

It will.

The spillage is an utter catastrophe and, in coming years, I fear that what was once regarded as a far-off misfortune will have been the beginning of detriments to health, economy, ecology and fair play nationwide.

This is especially bad news for the poor people who live along the gulf in Louisiana, Mississippi and, perhaps, Florida. And there are many.

These are the people who depend upon a healthy eco-system for their living. They are fishermen or farmers who rely upon the water and the land to yield the fruit of the labors. Edible fish do not come from petroleum-poisoned waterways. Good produce does not come from petroleum-drenched soil.

Fishermen and farmers are bracing for huge - even epic - losses from which they may not life long enough to recover.

Then there are the legion of people who clean hotel rooms, wait tables, cash chips at the casino, cook meals, drive shuttles and do all of the other leg work that keeps Gulf Coast tourism moving along. Tourists don’t flock to beaches stained by goo and peppered with dead fish and crippled birds.

Given that much of the coast is still recuperating and rebuilding from the twin devastations of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the BP disaster could not have had worse timing.

If there is a ray of hope in this sad state of affairs, it is that the country is blessed to have one Lisa Jackson at the helm of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Not only is Jackson a serious defender of the environment – as opposed to a staunch defender of the institution she heads – but she grew up along the coast and is bound to be particularly sensitive to the needs in that region.

We should have every confidence that, under her leadership, there will be no unctuous deals that let BP off the hook for the horrors it has caused, however accidentally.

And that’s something.

Will the SCOTUS Get a Sister? (*Black America Web*)

Date: Wednesday, May 5, 2010
By:

President Barack Obama is poised to make history by appointing the first black woman to the United States Supreme Court.

There’s a good chance he may. In fact, there are two formidable African-American female lawyers on Obama’s list of potential candidates for the job.

The president’s short list reportedly includes former Georgia Supreme Court Justice Leah Ward Sears and Judge Ann Claire Williams from Detroit.

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, a former civil rights lawyer who also was an assistant attorney general in the U.S. Justice Department and is a close friend to Obama, says he's not interested in serving on the Supreme Court. Patrick said he won't even interview for a possible appointment.

Obama, meanwhile, said he hopes to select a nominee by May 26, the same day he announced the nomination of Justice Sonia Sotomayor one year ago.

"We are certainly going to meet that deadline, and we hope maybe we can accelerate it a little bit so that we have some additional time for confirmation hearings before the start of the court's next term,” Obama said last month.

Valerie Jarrett, a senior White House advisor, told several African-American journalists that she would not speculate on specific candidates, but said Obama will conduct a thorough national search for the next Supreme Court justice.

“We have a president who appreciates the vital importance of the Supreme Court,” Jarrett told a group of black reporters who gathered at the White House, which included a correspondent from BlackAmericaWeb.com.

“Since the president took office, he has been determined to break the stranglehold that lobbyists have on Washington," Jarrett said last week. "Given his constitutional law background, you can be assured that he will be diligent and thorough in selecting the person who he thinks is best for this very important job. He will cast a net broadly.”

The White House is quietly moving forward with the vetting process – researching legal opinions and briefs written by potential candidates and poring over background information, tax records, and interviewing people close to the candidates.
Sears is a specialist in family law and the first African-American woman to serve as a state Supreme Court chief justice. A graduate of Emory University Law School, Sears is known as a no-nonsense lawyer who describes herself as a “moderate progressive.”

She founded and served as the first president of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys. She is a member of the Atlanta chapter of Links, Inc., and Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Georgia Trend magazine has honored Sears as one of the "100 Most Influential Georgians." She is also a friend of conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Judge Ann Claire Williams, a U.S. Circuit Judge on the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, earned her bachelor's degree from Wayne State University before attending law school at Notre Dame.

A native of Detroit, Williams served as a federal district judge in Illinois from 1985 until 1999, when the Senate confirmed her to the 7th Circuit. She was an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago for nine years and served as chief of the drug task force before President Ronald Reagan nominated her to the bench.

Obama knows something about the law. He earned his law degree from Harvard in 1991, where he became the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. Obama returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law, so the president has a good idea of what he wants in a Supreme Court justice.

The president has also shown that he's comfortable appointing women to top jobs in the administration, like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; Jarrett, his senior White House advisor; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Lisa Jackson, the EPA administrator; Susan Rice, the United Nations ambassador; and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who is also on Obama's list for the Supreme Court.

Robert Gibbs, the White House press secretary, said Monday that Obama is "close" to making his decision.

"I anticipate that he is working on the process of the Supreme Court," Gibbs told reporters.

Whether Obama will appoint a black woman to the Supreme Court is anyone's guess, but Americans could learn of the president's selection very soon.

What do you think? Should President Obama appoint a black woman to the U.S. Supreme Court?

Hispanic Media

Cabinet-Level Team to Meet with BP Reps on Oil Spill Clean Up (*United Press International*)

This story also appeared: *Hispanic Business*

May 11, 2010

President Obama has ordered a Cabinet-level team to head to Houston this week to meet with BP officials about the oil leak disaster, his spokesman said Monday.

Press secretary Robert Gibbs said in a statement Obama directed Energy Secretary Steven Chu to lead a team of top administration officials and government scientists in "an extensive dialogue with BP officials to continue to aggressively pursue potential solutions" to BP's ongoing Deepwater Horizon oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico that has threatened ecological mayhem on the Louisiana coast since an April 20 explosion sank the rig, killing 11 workers.

"President Obama remains committed to bringing any and all available resources to the Gulf of

Mexico," Gibbs said after Obama met with a number of his Cabinet members and senior staff in the White House Situation Room.

"Throughout the week, the president will continue to dispatch additional Cabinet officials to the region. In addition, to deal more generally with the harms created by oil spills, the president has requested that we send legislation to Congress to toughen and update the law surrounding caps on damages."

Asked by reporters before the president's meeting whether Obama was running out of patience with efforts to plug the leak, including a failed attempt at placing a containment dome over the wellhead a mile below the surface, Gibbs replied: "Look, I'd -- obviously, the president would like any of the actions that have been taken to have thus far work. We understood -- and I think BP was somewhat out front on the notion that the chances of the containment dome working were, I think they said a one-in-three chance."

Submarine used to clean spill (*Associated Press*)

This story also appeared: *impreMedia.com*

GULF OF MEXICO (AP) .- A remote-controlled submarine on Monday threw a dispersant substance to try to control a massive oil leak coming from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico , which hinted that it will be several weeks before it is reached control.

If the leak continues unchecked, within a month or exceed the disaster of the tanker Exxon Valdez in 1989 as the worst spill in U.S. history.

Specialised equipment by the robot trying to lose weight deepwater oil "is coming out of the seabed at a rate of about 795.000 liters (210,000 gallons) diarios_, after receiving approval from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, for its acronym in English), said British Petroleum.

The federal agency had stopped two previous attempts to throw the dispersant in order to test its potential impact on the environment and approved the third round of spraying that began early Monday, told The Associated Press Mark Proegler spokesman company, which owns the platform extractor which exploded and caused the leak.

An EPA spokesman did not immediately return messages left to him to request statements.

BP engineers in search of new solutions after a buildup of ice ruined his plan to channel the leak using a container box 90.7 metric tons (100 tons), went ahead with other possible short-term solutions, including the use of a smaller box and inject objects to plug the leak.

However, none of these solutions has been attempted so deep, about a mile (one mile).

At the same time, workers were drilling a new well, which help alleviate the pressure of the original, considered a more permanent solution, but it is expected that take up to three months.

It is believed that at least 13,300,000 gallons (3.5 million gallons) have been spilled at sea since a blast at the oil platform on April 20 killed 11 people.

Apparently the engineers are "trying everything that can happen to people" to stop the leak, said Ed Overton , professor of environmental studies at Louisiana State University .

Gulf Oil Spill Sparks New Questions About President Obama's Energy Policy (*Hispanic Business*)

April 30, 2010
Anne K Walters, dpa
Deutsche Presse-Agentur GmbH

WASHINGTON - The **gulf oil spill** threatening the Gulf Coast of Louisiana has raised questions about U.S. energy policy, just weeks after President Barack Obama backed new drilling for oil and natural gas off parts of the U.S. coastline.

Environmental groups, commercial fisheries and politicians are among those worried about the impact that the oil leaking from a well after a deadly rig explosion last week in the Gulf of Mexico will have, with some now calling for a halt to drilling offshore.

Florida Senator Bill Nelson, who has long spoken out against offshore rigs along his state's famed coastline, wrote in a letter to Obama that the accident shows "drilling too close to the coast poses too great a threat."

He called for the administration to indefinitely postpone its plans to allow more drilling.

But Obama said Friday that he stood by the idea, while stressing the need for strong controls.

"I continue to believe that domestic oil production is an important part of our overall strategy for energy security, but I've always said it must be done responsibly, for the safety of our workers and our environment," Obama said from the White House Rose Garden.

A month ago he said he would back drilling in coastal areas in the mid- and southern Atlantic, as well as parts of the Arctic Ocean off Alaska's coastline. Other areas like the Pacific coast and Alaska's Bristol Bay would remain off limits to oil firms, as Obama sought to balance environmental concerns with the desire to promote domestic sources of energy and reduce reliance on oil from volatile areas like the Middle East.

At the time, environmental groups decried the move and are now pointing to the Gulf of Mexico as evidence that offshore oil rigs are too hazardous.

"There should be no doubt left that drilling is too dirty and dangerous for our coasts and the people who live there," Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune said, noting that the accident that is believed to have killed 11 oil workers and prompted the ongoing leaks was on a state-of-the-art rig that was designed to be safe.

"This same disaster could happen at any one of the hundreds of drilling platforms off our coasts, at any moment. It could happen at the drilling sites they've proposed opening along the beaches of the Atlantic coast. We don't need to pay this price for energy," Brune said.

Top administration officials were in the Gulf to weigh the damages and lead the clean-up efforts, and stressed that the accident would be looked into before the approval for more offshore drilling sites goes forward.

Obama himself has said that the ongoing spill will be investigated before any new drilling begins. He ordered Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to review precautions on offshore drilling sites over the next 30 days and said new sites must have safeguards to prevent accidents. Existing rigs and wells were also to be inspected.

Carol Browner, assistant to Obama on energy and climate change, said Thursday that "what's occurring now will also be taken into consideration as the administration looks at how to advance" its energy plans. She noted that the government remains focussed on bringing the spill to a close and doing clean-up, but that there will be ample time for public input as the process of opening up more areas to possible drilling moves forward.

While administration officials were reluctant to pass judgement, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Friday, "This terrible event will, undoubtedly, require us to re-examine how we extract our nation's offshore energy resources and will have to be taken into consideration with any legislation that proposes to open new areas to development."

Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu called on the US not to retreat from drilling, but instead to reduce the risks as much as possible.

"We don't believe in burying our head in the sand and pretending that the country does not need 20 million barrels of oil a day, or pretending that we can get this energy tomorrow from somewhere else," Landrieu told the Senate.

An estimated 30 per cent of domestically produced oil already comes from the Gulf.

Landrieu pointed to the retreat from nuclear energy following the Three-Mile Island nuclear accident in Pennsylvania in 1979, saying it allowed the French to dominate the safe use of nuclear power and left the US technologically behind.

Oil spill polluting the Gulf of Mexico (*La Opinión*)

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| La Opinión La Opinión
WASHINGTON (EFE) .- The oil leak on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico after the explosion of a platform last week could become "one of the worst in U.S. history," warned the head of Guard Mary Landry .
"I'll be frank. The efforts of British Petroleum-operated oil tanker group Deepwater Horizon platform-to close the leak have been unsuccessful so far," Landry said in a press conference in New Orleans .

The coastguard chief refused to compare the accident with the tanker Exxon Valdez off the coast of Alaska in 1989, which poured 40 million liters of crude.
However, he stressed that "unless we close the well, will be one of the worst oil spills in U.S. history."
The directors of British Petroleum (BP) are trying to underwater robotic vehicle can cover the well.
If they fail, one of the alternatives posed by the authorities, according to Landry, is to burn oil as mana, thus limiting the scope of the oil slick, but further pollute the atmosphere.
The government of President Barack Obama announced today the launch of a full investigation into the causes of the explosion, in which three workers were seriously injured and eleven are missing.
Those responsible for the investigation, ordered by the Secretary of the Interior U.S. Ken Salazar , and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano , will have powers to issue subpoenas, hold hearings and compel attendance of witnesses.
The fire on the platform began on April 20 after an explosion that, according to makers of the platform, could have been caused by a blast, an unexpected increase in oil output pressure. The platform sank two days later.

In large measure, the task of plugging the well is difficult because the top teams are at about 1,500 meters deep on the ocean floor, something unthinkable in the oil industry a few decades ago but it is possible by technological advances and the overall need to find new deposits.
BP's initial efforts with its underwater vehicles operated by remote control to activate a device aimed at 450 tons at the bottom of March that can seal the well. Activation of the valve may take 24-36 hours.