

The past week, as oil from the blown-out Gulf well continued to spew, the politics of the spill garnered most of the headlines. For the thousands and thousands of Gulf Coast residents, it only adds to their anxiety to see their government focused more on scoring political gains than in treating this crisis as just that – a real and growing crisis.

People are hurting and lives are being wrecked by a disaster the likes of which we've never seen before. Our Gulf Coast fishermen, seafood industry, restaurateurs, tourist-related businesses and our broader community continue to see a clumsy and disjointed response to the creeping disaster lapping up on our shores.

More than two months have passed since the oil began gushing into the Gulf. Since that time, we've experienced direct environmental and economic impact from this catastrophe which struck our region at the worst possible time – the beginning of both the summer tourist and hurricane seasons. Yet, the federal government has so far stumbled and fumbled in its attempts to control this crisis.

The slow delivery of coastal booms, federal resistance to constructing sand berms to protect Gulf coastlines, bureaucratic delays in approving oil skimming vessels, and Washington's obsession with blame game congressional hearings and energy policy changes that are at best premature in their timing, have done a disservice to our coastal communities. It's past time for this nonsense to stop. The spill is not a partisan political issue but a national disaster.

This same frustration must have visited a Louisiana federal court judge who, last week, overturned the Obama administration's attempt to impose a six month moratorium on all deep water oil drilling in U.S. coastal waters.

While we must address the questions of oil drilling safety and whether existing regulations are enough to prevent the reoccurrence of a tragic event like the one we are now dealing with, it would instill greater confidence along the Gulf Coast if Washington were to demonstrate as much interest in stopping the spill - and cleaning it up - as it has in legislating new policy before all the facts are known.

To be sure, there has been great insensitivity to this crisis on both sides of the political aisle. In times of war and other national crises, our nation has pulled together to marshal our best talent and resources to overcome great trials. We must summon that same patriotic spirit and commitment to our fellow Americans along the Gulf Coast.

It's not too late for the federal government to kick away the bureaucratic stops that are unnecessarily hindering the progress we desperately need or for Congress to halt the political theater and work together to press the government into greater action. The recent White House appointment of Navy Secretary and former Mississippi Governor Ray Mabus to take control of the federal long-term environmental and economic restoration may be a step in the right direction; time will tell.

**Fallen Military Deserve Better from Arlington National Cemetery:**

For weeks now, The Washington Post has reported on an Army investigation into apparent mismanagement at Arlington National Cemetery which has allowed grave sites to become neglected and in some cases misidentified or lost.

The Post reported on June 11 that Army investigators found more than 100 unmarked graves as well as grave sites with headstones that were not registered. The paper reported that four burial urns had been "unearthed and dumped in an area where excess dirt is kept."

In the days after the Army investigation was made known, the Post further reported that discarded headstones were found in a creek which flows through the cemetery. Officials have concluded that the grave markers were likely rejects which were not destroyed.

According to the newspaper, the problems at Arlington first came to light after relatives of those buried in the cemetery complained. In response, Army Secretary John McHugh reprimanded Arlington superintendent John Metzler, who will leave his position by July 2. Additionally, the deputy superintendent has been placed on administrative leave.

Located on the grounds of General Robert E. Lee's Northern Virginia estate overlooking Washington, DC, Arlington National Cemetery is our nation's most famous military burial ground. It is the final resting place of two U.S. presidents, and over 300,000 military and their family members.

Like all Americans, I deplore any neglect of our cemeteries, especially Arlington. Our nation's military heroes deserve the full measure of respect for their honorable service and their loved ones must be assured that the mistakes committed at Arlington are corrected and never again repeated.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.