

Last Friday, I introduced legislation in the House to prevent Deepwater Horizon-polluters from deducting hundreds of millions of dollars from their tax bill for any compensatory payments made in connection with their role in the 2010 spill.

Over the last month, media reports have been rampant that the U.S. Justice Department and BP are close to agreeing on penalties that the oil giant would pay for its involvement in the Gulf oil spill. According to these reports, the Obama Justice Department is aggressively squeezing the five states of Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana into accepting a single, global settlement for violations of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and for the National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA).

If such a settlement is structured to over represent damages under NRDA, the RESTORE Act, which the president signed into law on July 6, 2012, would be circumvented, effectively limiting local control over how those fines are administered. Instead, under a global settlement that significantly overfunds NRDA, the federal government and Washington bureaucrats would once again be put in charge of how this money could be spent and on what projects.

The thought that Attorney General Eric Holder's Justice Department would strike any deal that allows BP to benefit from its recklessness and irresponsible behavior that led to 11 deaths – 12 if you count Gulf Shores boat Captain Allen Kruse – is simply outrageous.

In addition to the deaths, residents in these five states remember all-too-well the disruption to our lives along the Gulf Coast, as well as the economic and environmental havoc that the oil had on our pristine coastal environment. While there are many troubling aspects to what the Justice Department is reportedly doing regarding this settlement, perhaps most egregious is the prospect that BP would somehow be allowed to profit from this disaster while the true victims of the oil spill, the people who live along the Gulf of Mexico, would once again be left high and dry. Clearly, there is no justice in this sordid saga.

As such, my legislation is directly aimed at prohibiting BP, or any other responsible party, from gaining any tax advantage for fouling our beaches and polluting the Gulf. Obviously, there are many problems with the rumored settlement being negotiated during the political season. My question to Mr. Holder is simple: what's the rush in getting a settlement agreed to before November 6th? If this is such a good deal for the residents of the Gulf Coast, then won't it be

just as good a deal on November 7th or beyond?

If media reports are accurate, the potential loss of fine money flowing to our coastal communities could be significant as total fines collected are predicted to range from \$5 billion to \$20 billion.

Naturally, I am not alone in my deep concerns about any deal that steers a majority of oil spill fine money away from the Gulf Coast and puts it in the hands of federal bureaucrats. Earlier this month, in a bipartisan show of solidarity, eight U.S. Senators and several of my colleagues in the House from Florida to Texas and I signed letters to General Holder and President Obama strongly opposing any agreement that would circumvent the RESTORE Act.

At a time when it has proven extremely difficult to get anything passed by Congress and signed into law by the President with bipartisan support, the RESTORE Act was a loud and clear exception. It goes without saying, but I intend to continue speaking out against any settlement that does not honor the spirit and intent of the RESTORE Act to the people of America's Gulf Coast.

Veterans Clinic Closer to Reality:

Also last week, the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System announced that the long wait for a veteran outpatient clinic serving Southwest Alabama may soon be over. The VA has approved a contractor's bid to establish a 2,600-square-foot outpatient clinic at 156 Whetstone Street in Monroeville.

An opening date is not expected to be announced until completion of the outpatient facility and final approval by the VA. While more details are expected to be forthcoming, the new VA outpatient clinic will likely serve veterans in Clarke, Conecuh, Monroe, Washington and Wilcox counties.

The establishment of a VA outpatient clinic in Monroeville has been a priority of mine for a number of years as I have worked with the VA to make medical services more accessible to our

veterans, many of whom are aging and unable to travel to Montgomery or Birmingham for outpatient care.

I will keep you informed of the progress of the long-awaited new VA outpatient clinic.

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.

For release: October 29, 2012