

# Jo Bonner



## THE WASHINGTON CYBER REPORT

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### GULF OIL SPILL UPDATE

A month after the Deepwater Horizon accident and the tragic loss of 11 lives, the Gulf Coast community is being challenged in ways not seen since Hurricane Katrina. The ongoing oil spill has been described as a slow motion disaster that could take years from which to recover.

While the U.S. Coast Guard was on the scene of the oil rig destruction and oil leak within 24 hours of the accident, it took a week before the federal government began to recognize that the spill was a major disaster. The nature of this spill is one that the U.S. has never before faced – a well blowout almost a mile below the Gulf. Yet, incredibly, the administration’s initial response to the event was to dispatch Justice Department attorneys to the scene.

After it became apparent that the spill was going to become a regional threat and one that would directly impact our state, I contacted Governor Riley, urging him to activate the state emergency management agency. I also reached out to local and state officials and neighboring congressional districts in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. I have flown over the oil spill and viewed the impact on the coastline. I’ve consulted with local leaders across Baldwin and Mobile counties and I’ve met with Admiral Thad Allen, the leader of the federal response effort. In each case, I have pledged my assistance to help channel resources to areas of greatest need.

There are two simultaneous efforts underway to address the spill: stopping the leak, and containing and controlling its impact on the Gulf and along our shores. Some 22,000 people and 1,200 vessels are currently involved in this combined effort. Many from our community are volunteering, and approximately 11 million gallons of oil-water mix have been recovered.

Along the Alabama Gulf Coast, the effects of the ongoing oil spill are less dramatic than what we’re seeing in Louisiana, yet every effort is being made to protect our precious coastline and sensitive environment. As of May 25, nearly 373,000 feet of boom have been deployed along our shores.

The timing of the spill coincides with the arrival of the summer tourist season and while our Alabama beaches have not been fouled by oil, local officials are concerned that tourists will delay or cancel vacation plans, negatively impacting our economy. Commercial and recreational fishermen are already



*I recently met with Admiral Thad Allen, head of the federal oil spill response team, along with Governor Bob Riley, to discuss federal and state efforts to protect the Alabama coast. Photo: Robin Cooper, Governor’s office*

experiencing a marked downturn in business due to the federal fishing bans in a large area of the Gulf.

It’s vital that businesses impacted by this spill keep complete and accurate records in order to receive claims payments. BP is responsible for processing and paying damage claims and it has established offices in Baldwin and Mobile counties to accept claims and take your questions.

**BP Claims Offices: (Open 8AM to 7PM, 7 days a week)**

- Bayou LaBatre** – North Wintzell Avenue
- Foley** – 1505 North McKenzie Street (Hwy 59), Suite 104
- Gulf Shores/Orange Beach** – 24039 Perdido Beach Boulevard, Suite 1, Orange Beach

For those who wish to contact BP by phone, dial toll-free **1-800-440-0858**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

BP can also be reached on-line:  
<http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/doc/2931/542307>

For more links and information about the Gulf oil spill, please visit my web site at <http://bonner.house.gov>.

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### SBA Small Business Disaster Loans:

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is offering federal disaster loans for seafood and fishing-related businesses negatively affected by the oil spill. The SBA issues loans of up to \$2 million at 4 percent interest with up to 30 years repayment.

According to the SBA, eligible small businesses include those involved in shrimping, crabbing and oyster fishing in waters affected by the oil spill, as well as small businesses dependent on the catch or sale of shrimp, crabs and oysters; suppliers of fishing gear and fuel; and docks, boatyards, processors, wholesalers, shippers, retailers and other small businesses dependent upon revenue from fishing, recreational and sports fishing small businesses, and coastal small businesses.

For more information, you may call the SBA Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 or visit their web site at <http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance>.

## AMERICANS INVITED TO VOTE ON SPENDING AND POLICY



This month, the U.S. House Republican leadership launched two programs to enable Americans to directly impact the debate on Congressional policy and spending.

“YouCut”, an on-line forum targeting wasteful spending, allows Americans to voice their opinions on what government programs should be cut.

By joining YouCut, you can vote on-line or by cell phone. The programs receiving the most votes for cuts will be brought before the full U.S. House for a review. You can also suggest spending cuts of your own.

In the two weeks since YouCut has been launched, over 450,000 Americans have cast votes on a list of proposed federal spending cuts.

To make your voice heard, you can visit the YouCut website at: <http://republicanwhip.house.gov/YouCut/>. You need only provide your email address to vote.

On May 25, the House Republican leadership also began the “America Speaking Out” program, allowing the public to directly weigh in on both federal spending and legislative policy.

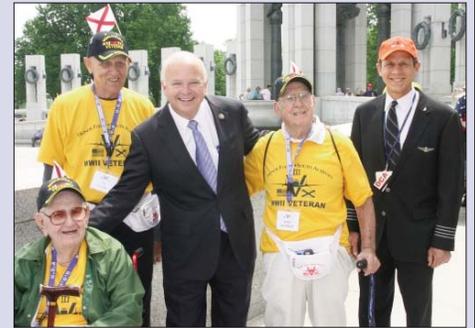


Everyone who joins the America Speaking Out site will have a voice in a national debate over such timely issues as job creation, energy, health care, education, the environment, federal regulations, infrastructure, spending, waste, tax reform, long-term debt, immigration, transparency in government, terrorism, defense, and foreign policy.

You can join the debate by visiting <http://www.americaspeakingout.com>.

## HONOR FLIGHT A FITTING REMINDER OF MEMORIAL DAY

Monday is Memorial Day, a time to reflect upon the sacrifices of those who fought and lost their lives in order that we can live freely in this great country. We cannot thank our military heroes enough for their service, nor can we ever forget those who have fallen in defense of America.



*I was honored to greet our South Alabama World War II veterans as they toured for the first time the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC in mid May.*

Here in South Alabama, we are proud of our Armed Forces – past and present – and we show it through worthy programs such as Honor Flight South Alabama which give our veterans the VIP recognition they truly deserve.

On May 12, I had the honor of personally welcoming a group of over 90 South Alabama World War II veterans, some who were age 90 and over, to our nation’s capital.

As the Honor Flight South Alabama delegation arrived at the World War II Memorial on the National Mall, I was pleased to present them with a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in their honor and a tribute I had entered into the *Congressional Record* commemorating their historic journey.

As this large group of Alabama World War II veterans slowly passed through the grand memorial, some of them in wheel chairs, it was inspiring to see many of the public, including children, stop and thank them for their service. There were a few tears shed and I’m sure many memories were made that day that will never be forgotten.

The non-profit Honor Flight South Alabama program provides free transportation to and from Washington, DC for local World War II veterans, enabling them to see for the first time the inspiring World War II Memorial, which was built in 2004 in their honor.

This was the third Honor Flight from our area since the program began in South Alabama in the spring of 2009. Much praise is due those who organize and raise funds for this worthy program honoring the veterans of “America’s greatest generation.”

Over 65 years ago, these brave men and women left the safety of their families to defend our land against an unspeakable evil and in the process faced an unknown future.

Their bravery and patriotism have inspired the generations that followed them and enjoyed the freedoms that these veterans and their comrades fought to protect. We can never repay the debt we owe these veterans for the preservation of our liberty.