

Morning Bell: Remember the Gulf

Posted July 6th, 2010 at 8:04am in [Energy and Environment](#), [Enterprise and Free Markets](#), [Protect America](#) with [10](#) comments  [Print This Post](#)

Remember 9/11. Remember Katrina. Remember Haiti. Often, after a disaster of epic proportions, we are urged to remember the victims and the lessons of how to avoid a similar catastrophe. These reminders are necessary because after the moment of impact passes, people's attention is drawn to other major events. Rarely ever, however, is the phrase used while the crisis continues unabated; while the administration that the media needs to hold accountable flounders in a sea of ineptitude, red tape and finger pointing.

Yes, we're talking about the Gulf oil spill. It may be the first time in U.S. history that a president and the national media's attention need to be refocused on a crisis while it is still, in fact, underway. Remember the Gulf.

We at The Heritage Foundation are not forgetting it. Starting today, a team of respected energy, environment, homeland security and response experts are traveling to the Gulf region. Over the coming week, we'll investigate what is and is not working and what more needs to be done (or in many cases, where the federal government should simply step out of the way), and we'll report our findings back to you.

Why are we doing this? Because it has now been 77 days since the Deepwater Horizon platform exploded, killing eleven workers, and setting in motion the spill still gushing today. Over that time, the outflow has gotten worse, [goals have been missed](#) and attention has waned. Since the disaster, President Obama has visited the region [four times](#). Only one of those visits included Mississippi, Alabama or Florida, states that are being summarily affected by economic and environmental damage. His first visit came only two weeks after the explosion, and after a national outcry.

During that time period, one could point to a number of issues and events that have taken priority for the president—and yes that includes political commitments but also vacations and hanging out with rock stars and sports personalities. But, to be fair, even when focused, the administration continues to flounder.

Obama's cabinet, including the EPA, continues to let ridiculous regulations stand in the way of oil being removed from the water. Skimmers that discharge separated water containing less than 1% of oil residue are being met with bureaucracy. Local authorities were unnecessarily [stopped from dredging](#) to build protective sand berms, out of concern the dredging was too close to the shoreline. The environmentalists who wish to protect our nation from some uncertain catastrophe are ignoring the one happening right this very moment.

Meanwhile, [according to the Associated Press](#), thousands of volunteers remain on the sidelines endlessly waiting for instructions. Skimmers remain docked at port. And today, [we learn](#) that BP has only captured a small portion of the oil they promised federal regulators in a March 24 report that went completely unquestioned. In fact, since the spill began, BP has only removed 60% of

what it promised could be removed in one single day, and yet we have no accountability. As John F. Young Jr., chairman of Louisiana's Jefferson Parish Council [told the Washington Post](#): "I think the federal government should have at the very least picked up a phone and started asking some questions and challenged them about the accuracy of that number and tested the veracity of that claim."

The question remains why President Obama is not concerned with this catastrophe; at least with the same vigor he so clearly displays when fighting Arizona immigration laws or defensively stumping for his [stimulus bill](#). Some infer that [politics](#) may have something to do with it. The President still has never visited Tennessee which was ravaged by deadly floods this spring. Tennessee shares a commonality with Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi beyond geography: a [right leaning electorate](#).

The president would surely bristle at such an accusation. Yet, the fact remains that his inattention causes some to entertain these conclusions. Other potential reasons are that his former support of offshore oil drilling—which many doubted was heartfelt—may have made this a political hot potato. The delegator-in-chief may feel his briefings are sufficient. It's possible that after successfully painting BP as the sole villain in a snake bitten [address to the nation](#) in June, he felt his work was done. This president, though preternaturally defensive and notoriously thin-skinned, works best on the attack.

We don't know why the president has chosen not to adequately focus on an ongoing crisis in the Gulf. But America deserves to hear his reasoning. And who will force this response? Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) simply brought up the oil spill in a White House meeting on energy, and was dismissed as a partisan by the president himself. When Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA) delivered a report criticizing aspects of the federal response, it was met with the arrogance the nation has come to expect from a petulant Robert Gibbs, who ever so cleverly corrected him on spelling one word in the report.

The national media may yet again ignore its watchdog role. When the president last took questions from the press at the G20, not one reporter asked him an oil spill related question. Government accountability cannot be achieved without the sunlight of a watchdog press corps. While networks still have anchors stationed in the Gulf, the stories today are largely of a human interest perspective, brutalized wildlife or tarball removal; rather than government accountability.

And, one may ask, where is the environmentalist industrial complex in all this? The pursuit of a clean environment comes second to the pursuit of federal largess, which Obama is [more than happy to accommodate](#). His response to the spill thus far has been to advocate for a [global warming tax](#) that will have zero effect on the spill (because the inconvenient truth is that less than 1% of domestic electricity demand is met by petroleum). But this tax will provide the eco-left what they have been clamoring about for years.

That's why the Heritage Foundation is on the case. The Gulf oil spill is happening, right now. The president needs to wake up to the disaster in the Gulf, and we intend to provide the alarm clock.

Quick Hits:

- Mexico's [drug war is heating up near the Arizona border](#) including border city Nogales which has had 131 murders so far this year, nearly surpassing 135 for all of 2009.
- According to [The Washington Post](#), the Justice Department will file suit as early as Tuesday against Arizona on the grounds that the state's new immigration law illegally intrudes on federal prerogatives.
- While state bureaucrats, legislators, and health providers [can't figure out how to pay hospitals and doctors](#), the [number of people visiting hospital emergency rooms climbed in Massachusetts](#) despite promises their health reform law would reduce emergency room use.
- The discovery that [a second labor union has filed inaccurate lobbying reports](#) underscores a more systematic problem with union disclosure requirements.
- Last Friday's Bureau of Labor Statistics report was the [worst private sector June jobs report](#) in decades.

Tags: [9/11](#), [BP](#), [crisis](#), [Gulf](#), [Katrina](#), [Morning Bell](#), [oil spill](#), [President Obama](#), [skimmers](#)



Author: [Rory Cooper](#)

- [Leave a Comment \(10\)](#)

You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

Related Posts

- [Morning Bell: Obama's Oil Spill To-Do List](#)
- [Morning Bell: An Offer BP Couldn't Refuse](#)
- [The Silent Treatment: BP CEO Tony Hayward and President Obama](#)
- [Obama's Oil Spill Speech Overreaches on Cap and Trade, Cancelled Drilling](#)
- [Morning Bell: White House in Disarray](#)