

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
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March 21, 2012

The Honorable Steve Scalise
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Scalise:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, supports H.R. 3096, the "Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economy of the Gulf Coast Act of 2011" (RESTORE Act).

The April, 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the Administration's subsequent moratorium on offshore energy production provided a one-two punch that has jeopardized the Gulf Coast's environmental sustainability and seriously crippled the region's economy. While much of the Gulf's environment and economy has begun to rebound, there remains significant work to be done to bring the region back to its full potential. The RESTORE Act would provide a broad platform to expedite this recovery process.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is tasked with collecting civil penalties from the parties ultimately found responsible for the oil spill. Unfortunately, existing law does not allow for allocation of any of the funds collected to be directed towards the environmental or economic recovery of the impacted areas. The RESTORE Act would remedy this inequity by creating the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, to be funded by redirecting 80% of the civil penalties collected by the EPA.

The RESTORE Act would bolster existing recovery efforts by allocating a portion of the funds to the five Gulf states to be used for ecological and economic restoration. Additionally, the legislation would establish the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Recovery Council and charge it with developing a comprehensive plan for ecological restoration and recovery, as well as fund recovery projects. Finally, the bill would create and fund a Gulf Coast Center of Excellence focused on research and innovation in relevant disciplines like fishery sustainability, coastal resiliency, and wetlands restoration.

The RESTORE Act is a common sense and bipartisan approach to a situation that has impacted the entire Gulf region. This legislation would not cost taxpayers a penny and is solely funded through the collection of civil penalties. The Chamber opposes any effort to change existing internal revenue treatment to effectively make the parties pay these penalties twice.

The Chamber supports H.R. 3096, and applauds your leadership, and the leadership of the bill's co-sponsors on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most prominent parts.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives