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U.S. Chamber, Alliance for Energy & Economic Growth Urge Salazar to Reconsider Gulf Moratorium

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As part of the Alliance for Energy and Economic Growth (AEEG), a broad-based coalition whose members develop, deliver, or consume energy from all sources, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sent a [letter](#) to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar asking him to reconsider the six-month standstill on offshore exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.

The letter, sent by the Management Committee of AEEG, notes that the moratorium imposed by the administration places the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Gulf residents and workers in jeopardy. The letter comes as the administration on Monday issued a new moratorium in response to two federal court rulings that halted their efforts.

“The de facto moratorium on all offshore exploration in the Gulf of Mexico will cost America tens of thousands of jobs, threaten the local economy, and increase our dependence on foreign oil,” said R. Bruce Josten, the Chamber’s executive vice president of Government Affairs and a member of the Alliance’s Management Committee. “The tragic accident in the Gulf is not justification for a blanket moratorium on offshore exploration such as the one the administration is once again seeking to enact.”

Although the moratorium purports to address only deepwater exploration, the administration has also halted shallow water exploration by not granting new permits, sending mixed signals about compliance expectations, and creating uncertainty around plans for a dozen new regulations. Within the next few weeks, nearly two-thirds of the shallow water fleet will be idled, according to the Shallow Water Energy Security Coalition.

The Louisiana Department of Economic Development estimates that the moratorium could cost 10,000 jobs this summer, with as many as 20,000 possible in the next 12-18 months. In addition, IHS Global Insight reports that if new permits were restricted until 2014, job losses could exceed 120,000.

The U.S. Chamber’s Institute for 21st Century Energy has led efforts to build a coalition of businesses who oppose the moratorium. In an effort to assess the economic damages from the spill and subsequent moratorium, the U.S. Chamber has been meeting with hundreds of members in the region. On Monday, the Energy Institute announced that 41 Gulf region business organizations had joined its efforts. Earlier this month, the National Chamber Litigation Center filed an amicus brief with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in opposition to the moratorium.

For more information on the U.S. Chamber’s response to the oil spill, visit <http://www.uschamber.com/issues/index/energy/spillresponse>