

Long Island Business NEWS

JUNE 11-17, 2010 | VOL. 57 | NO. 27 | \$2.00 | LIBN.COM

VIEWPOINT
■ Environment

Gulf spill's LI impact

By E. Christopher Murray



For over seven weeks, our nation has watched in horror as efforts to cap the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico have proved unsuccessful. The economic damage caused by the oil spill in the Gulf area is catastrophic, with estimates that the Louisiana fishing industry will suffer losses of \$2.5 billion and the impact on tourism along the Florida coast could be greater than \$3 billion.

Clearly, British Petroleum should pay the cost of cleaning up the oil spill, and our government should investigate what caused this occurrence so as to prevent future calamities.

However, even if oil will not be splashing against the beaches of Long Island, the negative effects on the Long Island economy will be greater than an increase in the cost of shrimp if this disaster results in unreasonable restrictive environmental and energy policies.

The Gulf oil spill took place shortly after President Obama endorsed the idea of increasing offshore drilling. There was strong opposition to this initiative prior to the Gulf spill, and that opposition will now undoubtedly grow.

Many environmental groups advocate greater use of renewable energy sources but, while utilizing renewable energy is desirable, for the foreseeable future we will still need oil to meet our energy needs. If we are to move to energy independence so that we are no longer beholden to foreign suppliers, a balanced energy policy will require continued offshore drilling.

Responsible dialogue over policy differences is becoming rare, and the fringe of each political party has made compromise a dirty word. However, environmental policy must entail compromise, balancing our nation's need to consume natural resources with our responsibility to assure those resources are available for future generations. There must be a rational discussion as to the benefits and cost of any environmental regulation, no matter how angry we are as a result of the Gulf oil spill.

If we allow the adoption of overly restrictive laws and regulations to occur as a knee-jerk reaction to the Gulf tragedy, Long Island and our national economy will be harmed by rising energy and utility costs just at a time when our economy seems to be recovering. The disaster of the Gulf oil spill will then extend beyond the harm done to the Gulf region, and Long Island will suffer - even if our beaches remain oil free.

E. Christopher Murray is President of the Nassau Council of Chambers of Commerce, Inc. and Litigation and Environmental Partner at the law firm Ruskin Moscou Faltiscek, P.C. in Uniondale.

RMF
RUSKIN MOSCOU FALTISCHEK P.C.
Counselors at Law