

ALCEE L. HASTINGS  
23RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
FLORIDA

RULES COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES  
HELSINKI COMMISSION  
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER

FLORIDA DELEGATION  
DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN  
SENIOR DEMOCRATIC WHIP



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0923**

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

- ☐ 2353 RAYBURN BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0923  
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-1313  
FAX: (202) 225-1171
- ☐ 2701 W. OAKLAND PARK BOULEVARD  
SUITE 200  
FT. LAUDERDALE, FL 33311  
TELEPHONE: (954) 733-2800  
FAX: (954) 735-9444
- ☐ MANGONIA PARK TOWN HALL  
1755 E. TIFFANY DRIVE  
WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33407  
TELEPHONE: (561) 881-9618  
FAX: (561) 881-9879

[www.alceehastings.house.gov](http://www.alceehastings.house.gov)

**Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings**  
**Amendment to H.R. 1229, Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act**  
**May 4, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, this bill is an irresponsible giveaway to the oil industry that has taken enormous profits at American taxpayer expense. Section 207 of the bill repeals the *Equal Access to Justice Act*, thereby eliminating the awarding of attorney's fees to litigants bringing successful legal challenges to offshore oil and gas activities, making this kind of litigation prohibitively expensive.



As the BP oil spill demonstrated, there has been a lack of federal oversight of the drilling industry. Consequently, legal challenges have become the only enforcement mechanism for many related laws and regulations. Removing the judiciary system from the equation makes it even less likely that large oil and gas companies will comply with environmental and safety standards.

Eliminating the awarding of attorney's fees means that the traditional groups who bring lawsuits on environmental or safety grounds, such as fishermen, small business owners and environmental groups, will no longer be reimbursed for the cost of successfully litigating these kinds of claims.

The idea that this bill will somehow eliminate an excess of lawsuits is ridiculous. Since litigation is by its nature is so expensive, these cash-strapped plaintiffs usually only bring those lawsuits with the most likelihood of success. Without the possibility of receiving attorney's fees, legal challenges will effectively become impossible.

Mr. Chairman, Section 207 of H.R. 1229 only helps large oil companies avoid having to comply with the laws of the United States. By striking this section, my amendment will force Members of Congress to choose between supporting large oil companies or protecting our environment.