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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 18, 2010
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**Gulf Economic Survival Team Meets with Department of Interior and White House
Officials to Plead for Timely Resumption of Deepwater Drilling**

BATON ROUGE - Louisiana Lt. Governor Scott Angelle and a delegation of state and local officials representing the Gulf Economic Survival Team (GEST) pleaded for a swift end to the six-month deepwater drilling moratorium in a meeting with U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in Washington, D.C. Wednesday, citing the devastating economic impacts that the moratorium will have on Louisiana and the entire Gulf Coast.

"When it comes to energy security, there is no more important piece of real estate in America than the coast of Louisiana," Angelle explained to Secretary Salazar in a meeting arranged by U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu. "We are a working coast with a long and distinguished history of fueling America."

"We are not here representing the oil and gas companies, we are here representing the Cheramie's, the Chaisson's, the Calais', the Boudreaux's and the Thibodeaux's; the common folks of south Louisiana who will be most impacted by this moratorium. While we realize that it cannot be 'business as usual' when it comes to offshore drilling, we know that we can do two things at once in America; we can implement measures to ensure the safest drilling environments, while at the same time allow offshore drilling to continue," the Lt. Governor continued. "We are urging the Administration to expedite the implementation of enhanced offshore drilling safety measures to reduce the length of the moratorium. This will help preserve the jobs of more than 20,000 men and women in our state who service the offshore industry and prevent negative impacts on every segment of our economy."

Angelle said Sec. Salazar appreciated the economic urgency for drilling operations to resume and indicated the Administration would proceed as expeditiously as possible to bring an end to the moratorium.

"As a result of our meeting, I think the Secretary now has a better understanding of the ramifications of the moratorium and of the severe pain that it will cause to local economies and local businesses," said Angelle. "He said our concerns will have his full attention in the weeks ahead, and we fully intend to keep the plight of Louisiana workers and residents in the spotlight. I remain hopeful that our pleas for an expedited process will be heeded."

Later in the day, GEST representatives had the opportunity to meet with Tina Tchen, Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, and Cecilia Munoz, Deputy Assistant to the President & Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, during which the representatives requested that the newly formed Presidential Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Disaster be housed in coastal Louisiana. Rather than remaining in Washington, DC, detached from the realities of Louisiana's "working coast," GEST requested that the Presidential Commission be housed at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux or the naval air base in Belle Chasse. This will enable the Commission to gain a valuable perspective of our industrial economy and accelerate the safety review of drilling operations.

In reaction to an announcement by the White House advisors that BP will be allocating \$100 million to pay rig workers left jobless due to the moratorium, GEST representatives stressed that the fund will not mitigate the trickle-down economic impacts suffered throughout the Gulf Coast due to the moratorium.

"What about the people who don't actually work on the rigs, but service the industry, like welders, boat captains and diesel engine mechanics? What about the grocery stores, restaurants, car dealerships and so many other businesses that will experience substantial drops in sales as oilfield service workers lose their jobs? Louisianans don't want a check from the federal government or BP; they just want to work!" concluded Angelle.

"I am pleased that we were able to accurately portray the economic effect on the tens of thousands of oilfield service workers whose livelihoods are being threatened by this moratorium," commented State Senator Norby Chabert, a GEST representative. "I am now also confident that GEST will have a role in the decision-making process for the historic coastal restoration initiative recently announced by President Obama."

"Less than a year ago, our economy was the most productive in the U.S., and we were helping to pull the rest of the nation out of a lengthy recession. Now, we face the possibility of massive layoffs, a housing market collapse and critical cuts in local government services as a result of the moratorium," said State Representative Gordon Dove, who also attended the meetings. "We plead with President Obama to do whatever it takes to get a safer drilling industry up and running again in a matter of weeks and not months."

Subsequent to the trip to Washington D.C., the Lieutenant Governor hosted a conference call today with Robert Abby, Acting Director of the Mineral Management Service, MMS employees, and members of industry to discuss the shallow water drilling permitting delays that have essentially caused a "de facto moratorium" on shallow water drilling. As a result, MMS has agreed to offer on-going clarification to the new permitting regulations as well as twice per week conference calls hosted by the Lieutenant Governor with industry participants so that frequently asked questions and regulatory issues can be addressed.

GEST is a grassroots effort supported by residents, business owners, business organizations and elected officials in Louisiana to urge President Obama to reduce the length of the Administration's six-month moratorium on deepwater drilling in order to save thousands of jobs in the region. To date, over 144,000 people have signed an

online petition supporting the GEST message. More information can be found at www.GEST.la.gov.

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