

**Statement of Mr. Reggie Dupre
Executive Director, Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District**

**Before the
United States House
Committee on Natural Resources**

Federal Oil & Gas Revenue Sharing (GOMESA)

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Reggie Dupre. I am currently the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District in Houma, Louisiana. I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to speak before you on behalf of the citizens of Louisiana. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here. Today I will speak with you about the vital importance that Federal Revenue Sharing has on protecting coastal communities in Louisiana. I will share my experiences in guiding legislation on the state level for dedication of offshore revenues, my current role of implementing large scale protection and restoration projects, and finally my experience growing up in a coastal community which is literally washing away every day from the Gulf of Mexico's intrusion on the coastal parishes of Louisiana.

Prior to becoming the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District, I served as a Louisiana State Senator and was Chairman of the Louisiana Senate Natural Resources Committee. My district covered all of the coastal areas of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. These two parishes have experienced coastal erosion rates higher than anywhere in the United States. In late 2005, I was the lead author of the State Constitutional Amendment that dedicated 100% of all future offshore oil & gas revenues to the task of restoring and protecting Louisiana's coast. I have attached a written copy of Act 69 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2005 to my statement. This Constitutional Amendment received a unanimous vote of the Louisiana Legislature, had 97 co-authors, and was approved in 2006 by 82% of the voters in a statewide election. The state of Louisiana is currently operating on a master plan for the coast which includes \$50 billion in projects designed to stabilize our coast and protect wetlands. This massive undertaking will not be possible without utilizing the recurring source of offshore oil and gas

revenue sharing. I believe the Constitutional dedication of our federal revenue sharing helped pave the way for Congress to pass GOMESA in late 2006. In fact, I personally consider this Act to be the most important bill I sponsored in nearly 14 years in the State Legislature. This is the only bill hanging on my office wall. This dedication is even more important than the bill I passed creating the Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority (CPRA). You see, a recurring source of revenue to protect and restore the coast is more important than the governmental agency created to implement the plan.

In 2009, I decided to leave the State Senate to become the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee District. My community had been the subject of a federal study since 1992 to protect the citizens of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes through a project called Morganza to the Gulf. This project has been before Congress for authorization four times since 2000 and finally was authorized for construction at \$10.3 Billion in the 2014 Water Resources Reform & Development Act. After 26 years of Federal studies costing the taxpayers \$72 million, not one dollar has been appropriated for construction. Yet, to date my district has completed nearly \$400 million of construction on the first phases of Morganza using only state and local funding. We were able to partner with the State of Louisiana by our citizens taxing themselves with 2 new sales taxes. The most recent tax vote passed in December, 2012 by a 72% voter margin to continue this effort. This local effort, while substantial, will not be enough to accomplish this task. Offshore revenues, with coastal protection infrastructure projects as an eligible use under our State Constitution, are the only source constant and large enough to continue work on the Morganza project – and others like it.

Finally I want to share with you my experiences growing up in Pointe-aux-Chenes, Louisiana; a small coastal community on the Terrebonne and Lafourche parish boundary line. This is a small fishing community made up of Native Americans and French Descendants which is literally at the epicenter of coastal erosion and land loss. The deterioration and slow destruction of this community has been my driving force in public service and professional life. I have witnessed in my lifetime a thriving community and culture reduced to small community currently on life support. These coastal efforts are the only hopes for this area and many others around the state of Louisiana.

It is important to note that the efforts and sacrifices of the people of coastal Louisiana have paved the way for the economic expansion of this country. The delta region of Louisiana has been sacrificed to

accommodate the building of Mississippi River levees in the early 20th century. The rates of subsidence and coastal erosion were exponentially advanced and the problems that we are facing today are the result. Navigation and commerce throughout the country has been saved, the heartland has been spared flooding of the mighty river, and the positive economic impact of this work to the country is immeasurable. But my region is gasping for survival as a result.

Today, the people of Louisiana's gift to the country is affordable domestic energy through its service of the oil and gas industry. My region is a leader in this service especially that of deep-water oil and gas production. Further, coastal Louisiana leads the nation in waterborne commerce; 60% of U.S. grain ships through our coastal ports and 21% of all commercial fisheries landings by weight from the lower 48 states come from our region. Our ability to work on this coast is threatened by our problems but our dedication and resilience answers the call each time.

I want to leave you today with a quote from an article written in 1897 in National Geographic Magazine by a well know engineer of that time. His name was E. L. Corthell and his article was in response to a debate that was occurring in the late 19th century on what secondary effects the leveeing of the Mississippi River would have on the delta areas of Louisiana. Mr. Corthell wrote, *"While it would be generally conceded that the present generation should not be selfish, yet it is safe to say that the development of the delta country during the twentieth century by a fully protective levee system, at whatever cost to the riparian states and the Federal Government, will be so remarkable that people of the whole United States can well afford, when the time comes, to build a protective levee against the Gulf waters..."*

You see, actions taken by the Federal Government in the early 20th century are destroying my homeland before my very eyes. The question before you is, "Is it fair for Congress to share its oil & gas revenue with Gulf States." The obvious answer is ABSOLUTELY! In fact, Congress needs to raise the percentage given to the states to 50% just as the Federal government sends to states with oil production on Federal on shore lands.

I thank you once again for the opportunity to speak today. I will be happy to answer any questions.