

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MAYOR MITCH LANDRIEU

SUBJECT: FIVE YEARS AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA

MODERATOR: ALAN BJERGA, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, HOLEMAN LOUNGE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 12:30 P.M. EDT

DATE: THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2010

(C) COPYRIGHT 2008, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, 529 14TH STREET, WASHINGTON, DC - 20045, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, PLEASE CALL 202-662-7505.

ALAN BJERGA: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Alan Bjerga. I'm a reporter for Bloomberg News and the President of the National Press Club. We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to our profession's future through our programming and by fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to our programs, please visit www.press.org/library.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and our attendees, at today's event, which includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists. I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. After the speech concludes, I will ask as many audience questions as time permits. I would now like to introduce our head table guests.

From your right, Frank Snellings, a realtor with Coldwell Banker, and a special guest of our speaker. Larry Guthrie, a library and a member of the National Press Club. Glen Marcus, an independent writer and producer for Public Television, also a Club member. Emily Erata, Deputy Mayor for External Affairs for the City of New Orleans. Mike Sorahan, Energy reporter for Greenwire. Rod Cookrow, editor, Plats. Senator Mary Landrieu, the sister of our speaker. [applause]

Skipping over our podium we have Andrew Schneider, Chairman of our Speakers Committee and Associate Editor for Kiplinger Washington Editors. Skipping over our speaker for the moment, we have Donna Leinwand, the reporter for *USA Today*, the

immediate past-President of the National Press Club, and the Club member who organized today's luncheon. Thank you Donna. Jane Campbell, Chief of Staff for Senator Landrieu. Matt Smallove, AP Radio. Tommy Burr, Washington Bureau Chief of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. And Jutrice Martell Gator, Executive Vice-President of External Affairs for Volunteers of America and a member of the National Press Club from New Orleans.

[applause]

On this day, five years ago, a storm was forming in the Atlantic Ocean that would first rip apart New Orleans, and then drown it. Hurricane Katrina's devastation was immense. Neighborhoods and towns disappeared. Much of the area's population fled to Baton Rouge and Houston, many never to return. President Bush vowed, at the time, that the United States would pull together to rebuild one of America's great cities. But, five years later, New Orleans still grapples with its trauma, with each success tempered by looming challenges ahead.

Our speaker today, a two-time Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, took office as Mayor of New Orleans in May to lead the city out of the muck. He inherited a \$67 million dollar budget deficit, a police investigation of the police department for civil rights violations, a murder rate ten times the national average, and a massive oil spill off his coastline.

The son of former New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu, and brother of Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu, says he will not gloss over his city's problems. He has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to help him reform the city's troubled police department. He's asked BP for a \$75 million dollar grant to promote tourism in New Orleans. And, he has cut \$30 million dollars from the city's budget.

But questions remain about New Orleans. Can it recover from Katrina and tackle its underlying problems? Mayor Landrieu is here to day to tell us about his plan. So please welcome to the National Press Club New Orleans Mayor, Mitch Landrieu.

[applause]

MITCH LANDRIEU: Thank you all so very much. To the head table, to all of our guests, Senator Landrieu, my baby sister, [laughter]-- The folks were wrong. If your telephone is on, the only forgiveness you get if it rings *Oh When the Saints Go Marching In*, not *Dixieland Jazz*. But thank you so much for having me.

We meet today in difficult times. Our national economy continues to struggle. Millions are out of work. After three long months, the runaway well in the Gulf is capped. But the die has been cast. And, over 200 million gallons of oil need to be cleaned up to save one of the most delicate and important ecosystems in the world.

Next week, we will commemorate the fifth anniversary of Katrina. Five years after, I stand here to thank all of you who helped us survive, to recover, and to rebuild.

So, to the first responders, to the millions of volunteers, the faith-based organizations, the American taxpayers, the cities that took us in, to the many nations of the world who came to our aid, the people of New Orleans thank you and offer our eternal gratitude.

But, for both Katrina and the BP oil catastrophe, our future is not just about survival. It's about resurrection. It's about redemption. It's about getting things right. We are not rebuilding the city we were. But, we are trying to create the city that we want to become. The world and we deserve a better New Orleans.

It has been five years since Katrina stormed through the Gulf, five years since the levees broke, and yes, drowned our city, five years since flood waters from the manmade disaster devastated an area nine times the size of Washington, D.C. and displaced more than 1.3 million American citizens. Five years, and we still grieve for the 1,836 people who lost their lives.

However, we come to remember-- and we must never forget that, in the fifth year of the 21st century, for four horrific days, there was anarchy on the streets of America. The government failed to do its job, and the people suffered. It's a moment we should never forget. And it is one that we should never repeat.

We have had hell and high water, pain and salvation. We survived Katrina, Rita, Ike, Gustav, the Great Recession, and the BP oil catastrophe. And so, the message is clear: Through it all, we are still standing, unbowed, unbroken, and ready to face whatever challenges come our way. Not because we want to, but because we have to.

Now, as horrific as they were, neither the BP oil catastrophe nor Hurricane Katrina created our problems. However, they did make them worse. And they made them more visible. For example, crime has been unacceptably high for a generation. We're grappling with an education system that was failing prior to Hurricane Katrina. Our healthcare statistics have always been bleak. We continue to lack affordable housing. When taking office, we were left with a multi-million dollar budget deficit. We have huge infrastructure problems. And the number of unlit and unpaved roads continues to mount.

Our battle for the heart, the soul, and the future of New Orleans is being waged on many fronts. And, faced with these awesome challenges, one could easily turn and could walk away. But we do not have this luxury. And, even if we did, it would not be in our nature.

Ironically, it is because of Katrina and the BP oil catastrophe and the depth of our problems that New Orleans is uniquely poised to be the city that defines 21st century America. We are building from the ground up, and attempting to set the standard for true community renewal in America. We are, in fact, the most immediate laboratory for innovation and change. And our success or failure will be the symbol for America's ability to accomplish great things. Or not.

Creating a 21st century city begins with making our city safe. Upon entering office, we voluntarily entered into a partnership with the Department of Justice. And now, we have the weight of the federal government behind our police department reforms. But a long-term solution to crime must start with providing an excellent education to the next generation of leaders.

Since Katrina, we have been on the cutting edge of education reform. In New Orleans, there is no longer a school system but a system of schools that are held accountable, have high standards, focus on results and engage families. Parents and students choose where to attend schools. And the schools that fail to live up to high standards are not allowed to stay open.

But the extraordinary thing about New Orleans Public Schools is the results. After decades of stagnation, test scores have risen markedly for the last three years. New Orleans is creating solutions, not only in criminal justice and education, but also for healthcare. One of the primary goals of federal healthcare reform is to usher in a new national primary care network exactly like the ones currently operating in the City of New Orleans.

Today, more than 87 neighborhood health clinics provide primary care to 292,000 residents. This access to care is unparalleled. It is affordable and focused on preventative care. It is rooted in the community. And, best of all, it is readily scalable. This is not a dream. This is not an unrealized plan for a distant future. This is healthcare in New Orleans today. But the system is still in peril. New Orleans is so far ahead of the curve that the funding we need right now is not available without further federal or state support. We cannot let them close.

Our network of neighborhood-based health clinics is a small part of another bold, new idea taking root in New Orleans, place-based community development. This is a holistic approach to revitalizing communities where different public and private entities work together to cluster amenities in close connection to surrounding multi-income housing.

When HUD Secretary Shawn Donovan came to New Orleans last spring, he went to Columbia Park, a new mixed-income development in a high poverty area of the city. The master plan for the surrounding neighborhood includes middle schools and high schools and early childhood learning center, a recreation facility, libraries, playgrounds, retail and, yes, green space, all to serve one neighborhood in New Orleans.

Now, Columbia Park is just one of many new place-based community developments underway. New Orleans, today, is the largest urban planning effort in American history. Together, we will build revitalized communities that are safe, that are healthy, and that are strong.

And we can do more. We can do so much more. But, in order to get this done, we need to break down the silos that exist across federal, state and local agencies, both

horizontally and vertically. We can't think of housing, healthcare and education as separate, unrelated policy areas to be addressed in separate parts. Instead, policymakers need to look at the whole. Initiatives must be integrated and coordinated, so that all the money hits the ground at the same time and the same place to produce something that is worthwhile.

So, as New Orleans begins to stand tall again, the people have rallied around our progress to find common ground. A recent study shows that, while we continue to struggle, 77% of the residents believe that our city is headed in the right direction, markedly better than in past years.

At the end of the day, we all have the same hopes: safe streets, excellent schools, and good jobs. And the people of New Orleans walk together, locked arm-in-arm, to make our city a better place for all of us to live. In fact, New Orleans is the coolest place in America. [laughter] Passionate young people are streaming into the city. There has been a revival of volunteerism. A vibrant spirit is on display at night in the restaurants and jazz clubs across the city. Last year, we had the biggest Mardi Gras in history. And it's just getting better.

In the next four years, we are hosting the Final Four, the BCS championship and the 2014 Super Bowl, where I predict the Saints will win their fourth championship in a row. [laughter] [applause] You all can say "Whodat" now. [laughter]

Since the BP oil catastrophe, President Obama has visited New Orleans twice and will soon join us for the fifth anniversary commemoration of Katrina. From my first day in office, he and his administration have been key partners. Eleven out of 15 Cabinet Secretaries have traveled to New Orleans in the last three months, most more than once. We are deeply appreciative of his support.

President Obama believes in New Orleans. Now, for every challenge we face, the opportunity and responsibility exists to change, to improve, and to grow. But, there is no more complex, nor pressing issue than the crisis off of our coast. On April 19th, the BP rig exploded and 11 men lost their lives in this tragedy. And we still grieve for them today. And, for nearly three months, BP couldn't find a way to cap that hellish hole, which spewed the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez disaster every four days.

Over 200 million gallons of oil flooded into the Gulf. And the effect will be felt for years to come. In the coming months and years, it is estimated that \$26 billion in economic output, 24,000 jobs could be lost. Not to mention the cost to the suffering families. Everyone is affected, from the oyster processors like Sal Cinceri(?) to shrimpers like Brian Amos, from rig workers like Brett Gibbs to the boat dock operators like Blackie Campo, from hotel workers like Leroy Hawkins to waiters like Steve Raybear(?), from crane operators like Shawn Ryan to tour bus operators like Ozzie LaPort, it just keeps going and going and going.

The bad economy has already hurt local government with the BP oil catastrophe further impacting revenue. Teachers, police, fire and other public services are all affected by this cascading and far-reaching crisis. Our entire way of life in our culture is threatened. And every one of us knows what is at stake.

It is true that BP has finally capped the hole. And the immediate mission is clear. Capture the oil. Clean the coast. Compensate those that have been impacted. But hear this, America. BP and others are acting like this is the beginning of the end. It is not. We have no confidence in the claims that much of the oil is gone. In fact, a NOAA sponsored study released on Tuesday found that 70% of the oil remains in the ecosystem. This is the beginning of the beginning.

This disaster is yet another defining moment for the country and for New Orleans. We must reflect on the past and chart a new course forward. Before the BP oil catastrophe, Louisiana's wetlands, America's wetlands, were already disappearing, delta on the planet. For almost 100 years, the Louisiana coast has been slashed and it has been burned. Since 1930, over 1,900 square miles of wetlands have been lost. The area lost is the same size as the metro areas of Washington, D.C., Houston, New York, Atlanta, Denver and Los Angeles combined.

Every year, 15,300 acres of coast evaporate into the Gulf. That is the same as losing the National Mall 100 times over and over and over again. By the time I finish this speech, another acre of America will have disappeared. We are committing coastal suicide while weakening our country.

The destruction Louisiana wetlands is a direct result of human action, not mother nature. Over the past 70 years, levy and dam construction in the Midwest and the plain states have stopped the natural flow of river, depositing sediments that build up marshes and estuaries.

Fertilizer runoff from farming in Iowa and Illinois create noxious cloud that kills everything in its path as it traverses down the Mississippi River. That runoff creates a dead zone in the Gulf that is an astounding 7,700 square miles, larger than the size of the State of Connecticut.

Most damaging, though, are the oil companies' 10,000 miles of canals and pipelines that snake through the marshes and bring oil and gas to onshore refineries, to provide energy to all of the people in this country. The dredging for pipelines and canals allows saltwater from the Gulf to flood and poison the wetlands.

Now, when our children go fishing off Cocodrie, Delacroix, Lafitte and Grand Isle, even they can see the land that has disappeared. Islands vanish. Rows of trees are submerged. And waves lick close to our homes and to our communities. It seems to have happened so quickly. But really, it was generations in the making. The BP catastrophe has accelerated the destruction and heightened the awareness of how close to the brink we really are.

Tom's Picayune coastal expert, Bob Marshall, said that with 200 million gallons of oil in the Gulf, "Our coast is like a cancer patient who has come down with pneumonia. The pneumonia is serious. But, after the fever breaks, he will still have cancer. If all we do is clean up the oil, we will have cured the pneumonia, not the cancer. But, we will have missed the bigger point and squandered the opportunity to make lasting changes to save our home and make our country strong again.

The people of the Gulf Coast face this reality every day. And the rest of the nation needs to start supporting projects that can protect what it is that we have left. Americans have a stake in Louisiana's coast. Because in a measurable way, the strength of the nation's economy depends on it. The U.S. economy is intimately linked to the Gulf Coast. For decades-- For decades, we have been the top of the spear in this nation's fight for our economic, our energy and our national security.

Every year, Louisiana provides America with more oil and gas than this nation imports from Saudi Arabia. Americans consume 21 million barrels of oil a day. Only eight million is produced domestically. Twenty-five percent of that comes from the Gulf of Mexico. Not to mention that Louisiana is also the home to five of the nation's top 15 busiest ports.

We are the gateway for the nation's goods. With 460 million tons of cargo annually shipped down the Mississippi to the world, and moved up the river to the heartland. And, let us not take for granted that Louisiana's coast is the nursery of the Gulf, home to the second largest fishing industry in America, annually accounting for 30% of all seafood consumed in this country.

So, whether it is food, clothing, metals, oil, the rest of America can rely on us to put food on the table, keep the lights on, and keep gas in the tank. Now, contrary to popular belief, gas does not come from the gas pump. [laughter] Ever heard that? By focusing on high or short-term profits, instead of long-term sustainability, we are greedily robbing resources from future generations.

Decades of backroom deals have left the coast defiled. Poor funding decisions by state and local governments have added to its demise. The federal government is taking billions of dollars of revenue from our shores and redistributing it to other parts of the country. National environmental groups cluster on the East and the West Coast, leaving local environmental groups on the Gulf Coast to fend for themselves.

At the same time, BP has been incredibly irresponsible and negligent. They have arguably the worst safety record in the industry. They had no plan for capping the well or capturing the oil if a blowout preventer failed. And, while the oil gushed in the Gulf for 85 days, BP consistently dragged its feet to clean up, compensate, missed meetings, and seemed to treat the crisis with disdain. They just wanted to have their life back, as if it were our fault.

And, once BP is finished pillaging the coast for all that it's worth, shirking their responsibility, in my opinion, they're poised to cut and run. Throughout their \$50 million dollar advertising campaign, BP vows to make it right. But their words don't match their actions. If BP really wanted to restore their reputation and invest in the Gulf community, BP would act quickly, not slowly. They would move their regional headquarters to New Orleans, lay down roots in the community, compensate everyone that is impacted.

They would fund seafood testing and tourism marketing, and make substantial investments in restoring the coast. And, it would not have taken them over 100 days to begrudgingly, and only partially fund mental health initiatives for communities suffering up and down the coast.

BP still has not responded to urgent requests for food, rental assistance, and economic gain for some victims. Instead, BP's actions to date are of a company that is not truly sorry, and is not willing to forge a new path. These decisions are made by a company whose corporate culture, today, seems to be focused on share price and limiting liability, not by a corporate morality of stay and invest. And that is a shame.

BP can redeem themselves and truly make things right. But they must act now. We welcome and encourage them to do so. But Louisiana refuses to be used, to be abused, and to be thrown away any longer. It is time to change course, innovate, adapt, and hope for a better future. But hope is no substitute for a plan.

In the short term, we must lift the moratorium on deep water drilling. It is, in fact, possible to drill safely and to protect our environment. Energy consumption continues to rise. But Americans don't want to drill in Alaska, off the coast of Florida, off of the East Coast, or California, or buy from foreign dictators.

As we aggressively pursue viable alternative forms of energy today, we can't rely on hydrogen fuel cells, wind, solar or biofuels alone. Currently, renewable energy sources can only fulfill seven percent of our daily demand. We must drill safely and securely in a way that sustains our energy needs, restores our coast, and provides us a bridge to the future.

Just this past week, Blade Dynamics announced the creation of a wind turbine factory that will create 600 new green jobs in New Orleans. We're in the business of providing every type of energy. And, this is perfectly reasonable. It is not a zero sum gain. We are not limited to "drill, baby, drill" or stop drilling forever. We can do better. We must drill and restore. And, we know how to restore our coast. We know the importance of land-building divergence and sediment-pumping systems.

Some of the country's best minds have dedicated their lives to solving this problem. We have a way. Now, we need the will, and now we need the resources. According to the Clean Water Act, the federal government can fine BP up to \$21 billion dollars. The lion's share of those funds should go to the people of the Gulf Coast to restore the damage done.

The Landrieu-Domenici Gulf of Mexico Security Act promises the Gulf Coast a fair share of oil royalties, which must be dedicated to restoring the coast. However, the revenue sharing does not go into effect until 2017. Knowing this, Senator Landrieu has introduced the Respond Act, which would enact fair share immediately. Congress should pass it.

But the entire industry has had a huge historical impact on the coast and must do its part to maintain the very land it uses to support its operations. And ethic of conservation and stewardship is as old as the country itself, and should be renewed. It is time for oil companies to step up and create a conservation fund to protect and to conserve the coast.

Other oil producing nations have already set this precedent. How ironic that England, the corporate home of BP, takes 50% of revenue off the top from oil and gas profits, Brazil 60%, China 75%, Nigeria 85%. The federal government's take for outer continental shell drilling in the Gulf pales in comparison to these other countries.

Oil and gas companies pay far less to drill here and have fewer regulations on restoring the land that we destroy. Increasing royalty rates by a slight margin would produce billions of dollars for restoration funding, last year alone, while maintaining our global competitive advantage.

So, combined penalties for gross negligence required under the Clean Water Act, fast tracking, respond, revenue sharing, and an increase in royalty payments, the Gulf Coast would finally have the funds necessary to start restoring the wetlands and enable another generation to benefit from our natural resources.

This is not a partisan issue that divides us. Our way of life depends on sustainable drilling. We must preserve and protect what it is that we have left. President Theodore Roosevelt, a hero to both the left and the right, set the course when he wrote, "It is not what we have that will make us a great nation. It is the way in which we use it."

It is time to stop exploiting our resources in a way that is economically hypocritical, environmentally ignorant, and morally wrong. We all need the Gulf of Mexico, its resources, its delta region, its food and recreation, its culture, now and forever. This is about preserving a way of life.

So now, we have come full circle. Katrina and the BP oil catastrophe, two sides of the same coin. They are both manmade disasters. They both could have been avoided. They both brought the Gulf Coast to its knees. They both cost people their lives. And, they both have responsible parties sidestepping their obligations to solve the problem.

We can change. The legacy of Katrina and the BP oil catastrophe will be defined by our actions now. New Orleans is the best laboratory for change in the United States of America. The restoration of our coast will show the world how the government, business

and people, acting in concert, can protect the Gulf Coast and turn crisis into opportunity, frustration into motivation, tragedy into triumph.

As we protect our coast, we will simultaneously protect all that we have built and hold dear inside our city, and revitalize the urban landscape, creating better schools, preventative care clinics, housing opportunities, and new economic initiatives to promote sustainable energy.

We will do even better. Imagine a New Orleans that is the vanguard of a diversified, interdependent 21st century knowledge-based economy, creating thousands of jobs and billions in economic revenue. Our children and grandchildren will work in the Gulf. But they will design turbines for hydroelectric power, invent new ways to control tidal flow to restore our wetlands and estuaries, experiment with cutting edge ways to produce biofuel from algae, engineer carbon-neutral clean technology, and create world-class flood control devices.

This moment will define the 21st century. And we cannot afford to fail. The challenge has been laid before us. It will test our resolve. The world is watching to see if America can still do great things. But we've been here before, faced challenges as large and as difficult. And, we have overcome. Again and again, our will has been tested. And, if God is willing, and the creek don't rise, we will find a way, or we will make one. Thank you very much.

[applause]

ALAN BJERGA: And thank you, Mayor Landrieu, for taking time out of your busy scheduling and coming up here to Washington, D.C. to address the National Press Club. We have no shortage of questions for you today. Several of them dealt with outlook and reports on state tourism. What is the status of tourism in your city in the Gulf Coast region? And, have you seen any drop-off in tourism or convention bookings since the BP oil spill?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Thank you very much. And I appreciate, again, so much, being invited to be with you. A couple of comments. We, to put in context, post-September 11th, because New Orleans is a tourism economy, our tourism industry dropped dramatically. It got back up to full speed. And then Katrina hit, and it went back down to the bottom. And was just getting back to where it needed to be, before the BP oil spill.

Originally, because of the way the storm came in from Katrina, a lot of the infrastructure for tourism was not damaged. But, what happened was, a lot of people did not book conventions. And, anybody who knows about the tourism industry knows that you book them three or four or five years out.

All of the pictures that were on TV-- CNN, the whole nine yards, made people in North Louisiana, people around America think that Shreveport was still under water, for

a very long period of time. Now, for those of you that are geographically challenged, Shreveport is in the north part of the state and never got hit by the storm. [laughter] Hence the power of television and images.

But, what happened after the BP oil spill is that a lot of people stopped traveling. And, there are a lot of folks that stopped booking conventions. Basically, on the national level, because of what you saw in Florida and Mississippi, a lot of folks and businesses were hurt very badly. We're in the process, right now, of, to the detail, identifying what that was.

We expect, at this point in time, to have numbers next year that reflect that tourism went down somewhere between 12 and 16%. That's as close as we can get now. Unfortunately, you won't know exactly what those numbers are until next year. But we're tracking those numbers very carefully.

Having said that, it is important for the country to know, as President Obama showed us the other day, the seafood is safe. It's edible. You can have a wonderful anywhere on the Gulf Coast today, and you should come down and enjoy yourself.

ALAN BJERGA: In general, how badly has the BP oil spill affected the economy of New Orleans?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Well again, when I speak about New Orleans, I want to be careful to speak about the parishes that are south of New Orleans as well. Because the City of New Orleans is, in fact, a coastal city now. And, by the way, some of you live in coastal cities, although you don't know it yet. [laughter]

But, in any event, as I iterated during the speech, if an oyster bed is closed because the water is closed, that person who harvests those oysters can't bring them to Blackie Campo's dock. And, if Blackie Campo's dock is not open, then the trucker who comes to get them can't get them. And the trucker can't go to Sal Cinceri's oyster processing plant. And he can't deliver the oysters to the 86 restaurants: Commanders Palace, Galitrois(?), etcetera, etcetera. If he can't do that, and the restaurant closes, the waiters and the waitresses can't work, you begin to see that.

Simultaneously, on the fundamental issue of drill/not drill, many of the families that work in this economic change both drill and fish at the same time. And so, the consequence not only has been dramatic, it's been a double whammy. And that is why Senator Landrieu, Governor Jindal, all of the elected officials have been really pushing very hard to identify very specific ways of how to drill safely and to fish at the same time.

So the consequences are dramatic. Ken Feinberg will take over the claims process, I believe, on Monday. And, I believe that you will begin to see the direct effect of how large this really is. It's going to last a very, very long time. And, as I said in the speech, this is not the beginning of the end. It is the beginning of the beginning.

ALAN BJERGA: When will you next be meeting with President Obama? And, what issues will you raise, especially regarding the drilling moratorium?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Well, all of you know, now, that the President has announced that he's coming to New Orleans next Sunday. We are thrilled by that. As I said during the speech, President Obama, himself, his entire top level staff, his Cabinet Secretaries, Senator Landrieu's office, the entire federal government has been fantastic in the work that they have done in the post-Katrina relief effort.

He and I have a difference about the moratorium. Everybody in Louisiana supports the concept that you should deal with that with a scalpel, not a hammer. And that we believe that you can get back to drilling safely. It's critically important for the rest of the country to know that drilling can be done safely. And we believe that it can.

We have worked very, very hard in the last couple of months to prove that. We think that we've done so. So, I will thank him. I will continue to ask him to work with us as he has done in the past to continue to rebuild a great American city. And, we will politely discuss the moratorium issue when he is there.

ALAN BJERGA: This questioner takes note of the "delicious Gulf Coast shrimp served at the National Press Club today." The National Press Club appreciates that comment. And the question is, how safe is seafood from the Gulf?

[laughter]

MITCH LANDRIEU: You all want me-- First of all, the shrimp was great. We have a number of proprietors from restaurants in here that actually serve Louisiana food-- Acadiana(?) is in the house. Nice to see you guys. Thank you all. The seafood is safe. It is the most tested seafood in the world. And, ironically, people are importing from other places that don't have seafood testing at all.

It is one of the reasons why we continue to push on BP to fund a very robust testing program, because notwithstanding how many times-- and marketing program. Because notwithstanding how many times you say it, you have to prove it over and over and over again. And plus, if you don't have a complete and total baseline, people will not believe you. Hence the power of marketing.

Governments and people cannot compete with the images that you put in your paper and on the video streams. If you open up every show with, still, a picture of the oil bubbling out of the Gulf, that's what people see and that's what people hear. And so, seafood testing, financing it, having a robust seafood testing program on the federal, state, local levels, is critically important. And then, marketing is critically important. But the fact is, the seafood is safe. It's edible. And, New Orleans-- did I say this?-- is a wonderful place to come and visit. [laughter]

ALAN BJERGA: The audience breathes a sigh of relief. We have several questions about political relations in Louisiana. This questioner asks--

MITCH LANDRIEU: I'm not admitting anything.

ALAN BJERGA: Given your Governor's resistance to federal aid and intervention, how is that affecting what you are trying to do for New Orleans?

MITCH LANDRIEU: [laughter] Are you serious? [laughter] Okay, here is the thing. I served at Lieutenant Governor with Governor Jindal. We had a really wonderful working relationship. But, we don't think alike on every issue. One of the things that we have talked a lot about is that, when we disagree, we're hard on the problem and soft on the person.

For example, I had a strenuous disagreement with Governor Jindal about his unwillingness to receive funds for high speed rail. I thought that was a mistake. I also thought it was a mistake not to receive stimulus dollars. First of all, I think it was a good idea to pass it. Secondly, I want more of it, not less. And that was when I was Lieutenant Governor.

As the Mayor of the City of New Orleans, one of the difficulties that Mayors and Governors have is what the relationship is with Washington, D.C. just as a matter of policy. The United States Conference of Mayors has noted this many, many years ago. There used to be a way for money to go directly to the city halls rather than to the state houses. That has changed. And that has, as you can see, policy implications when Governors and Mayors don't agree on what they should be pursuing and not. Tom Cochran is here with the United States Conference of Mayors. Folks from the National League of Cities are here. This is a major issue for Mayors across the country.

You can understand how it complicates matters if the Governor wants or doesn't want and a Mayor thinks differently. And, in fact, it is just an interesting dance that you have to do when you come to Washington, D.C. and say, "Well, as far as the state is concerned, that may be true. But, as far as the city is concerned, we love the fact that the federal government is beginning to invest in New Orleans. And this is the reason why."

The country has to stop seeing cities as individual entities that somehow don't have anything to do with the entire body politic. Cities are not competitors with each other, cities are partners with each other to create an economic engine to compete with China and India and other places. All of us are economic engines. Hence, the part of the speech where you stop seeing New Orleans as this lovely little place that you can come visit and hide every now and then, this is a major economic engine that has a lot to do with your economic security and your national security.

And, by the way, the rest of the international community sees this as well. For those of us that travel internationally, you have heard people who are our friends and allies say, "Why does America continue to preach about how to build democracy abroad

if they can't rebuild a piece of themselves?" I want you to think about that. And it has an impact on our moral authority to speak across national and international issues as well.

And so, infrastructure projects, major funding issues to help cities stand up, always make America strong. And, of course, New Orleans wants to continue to be a great partner. Thank you.

ALAN BJERGA: Given that you have been a two-time Lieutenant Governor and Mayor of the state's largest city, at what point or at any point would you have any interest in Governor Jindal's job? [laughter]

MITCH LANDRIEU: I love my job. [laughter] I just got here, for goodness sakes.

ALAN BJERGA: If oil pipelines are such a large reason for coastal degradation, why is Louisiana's political establishment so supportive of oil companies?

MITCH LANDRIEU: That's an excellent point. And this is, I suspect, hard for the nation to understand. But, guess what. It's not just us. As I said in my speech, all of us are guilty, in terms of how we have taken resources out of the ground and not restored the ground. A lot of it has to do with being able to eat and not having the power to push back, or not having the wisdom and the strength to say, "You can drill but you have to restore."

And, just as over the years, we have gotten better at food regulation, every kind of regulation that has been in the book that needs to be measured appropriately, so too have we gotten to that point where it's become patently obvious that, if you continue to degrade the land the way that you do, and not restore it, which is the important part, then you are on an unsustainable path, moving forward.

And now, irrespective of what people have done in the past, we have to change course on the federal side, on the state side, on the local side. And, by the way, national environmental groups that, in my opinion, have kind of skirted past Louisiana because, I've heard before, "they kind of deserved what they got because they like the oil companies so much," it doesn't work anymore. We have to change.

And the good part about that is we actually know how to do it. And, on top of that, it's not something that America is in alone. It happens all over the world. So, to the extent that we're in an international market, we're not going to be at a competitive disadvantage for requiring oil companies to drill and to restore.

And, by the way, until we find a new way, we don't really have much choice. Because fossil fuels provide most of what it is we're doing now. The point is to get started and to begin transitioning, not close our eyes. And, again, not get into the zero sum game of "drill, baby, drill" or never drill at all. We're smarter, and we're faster than that. And, we have to find a better way.

ALAN BJERGA: Some urban planners say the parts of the city hit hardest by Katrina are so far below sea level that they should not be rebuilt. Is it your intention to fully restore those neighborhoods? Or is there too much risk?

MITCH LANDRIEU: You know, I hate to tell you all this, because people think you get your gas from the pump. But we're not the only ones that live under sea level, below sea level in the country. We hear that argument all the time. It's really just kind of interesting to us that people start off the premise that, if you live below sea level, you shouldn't be able to live there.

The Netherlands is an example. If you actually look at most of the studies that are done, and you ask which cities in total are most vulnerable to storms, Miami kind of gets right up there. And then, New York is right next to it. We're actually fifth. So, we don't-- We don't want to really invite the debate about everything below sea level doesn't have a right to be there, because we know the answer. And you don't want to have that debate either.

And so, from that perspective, the question is, is it possible to design a protection system, either through coastal restoration, levies, building codes, that actually protects very importantly culturally significant places of America? Shame on us if we can't do that. And we should.

And so, we kind of take that question, if I might say to you, in a fairly pejorative way. Because we heard, many, many, many times after the storm questions that no other place in America gets when they got hurt. Florida was hit with four storms in a year. And not a congressman or a Senator, that I can recall, from anyplace else, stood up and said, "You really shouldn't rebuild those condos on the beaches of Florida." So, it's a curious question to us, if I might be a little bit defensive. Go ahead, girl. [laughter] Come on and tell mama I'm on it. [applause] Do you understand what I'm saying?

So, here is the answer to the question is this. If the country fulfills its obligation to protect its own selfish economic interests, national security, and energy concerns, you will rebuild the coast. And, if you rebuild the coast, and then you satisfy your own selfish economic, national security and energy concerns by making the Mississippi work the right way, which is why it's there-- that's why Thomas Jefferson bought the joint as they say-- If you do those two things, and you make the levies the way that you're supposed to make them, and design them the way we were supposed to design them, and engineering the way the American people were supposed to engineer them, and then we do our job with building codes, New Orleans is as safe as anyplace in the world.

And I don't know if I said this or not, but New Orleans is a wonderful place to come visit. [laughter]

ALAN BJERGA: Following on rebuilding efforts: How will you grade the Corps of Engineers' efforts to rebuild and improve the levies since Katrina? Is there more the Corps could or should be doing?

MITCH LANDRIEU: This is an excellent question. And, I want to answer it in two dimensions. It's important to note that the Corps of Engineers is a military organization, right. And, as such, they will only answer the question that is asked of them. Are you with me? Okay. And so, the Commander in Chief, whoever he or she may be at any point in time, says to them, "Will you please tell me how much it's going to cost and how long it will take to build back levies to category three strength, so that the City of New Orleans is protected more than it was before Katrina," they will answer the question. And they have done that. They answered that question.

And, after a lot of pulling and tugging and yelling and screaming and bureaucratic inertia, they finally got up and got on it and did a really good job of fortifying the levies in and around New Orleans, consistent with what the federal government and Congress funded. Is that a fair statement?

Alright. Now, having said that, it is not fair to say that the City of New Orleans, and the levies that protect this country, are sufficient to protect us from what we already know is coming our way. So, let's be clear about this, for whatever reason. And, everybody's got their own theories about why it's happening.

The storms are coming more frequently. They're moving slower. They're bigger. And they're more vicious. And, it is more likely than not that more category five, four storms are coming. And so, it is not fair to say that the country has done its job in providing the resources necessary for the Corps to execute what it is that they should be asked, which is, "What is it going to take? How much money is it going to cost? To build category five levy protection involved and including rebuilding the coast, getting the levies to the height that they need, and fortified significantly, and then having the city attend to building codes?" And unless and until we do that, you will not be able to say that the City of New Orleans is as protected as she should be or that America's selfish interest is being protected and/or satisfied. Thank you.

ALAN BJERGA: What do you need to do to facilitate bringing more people back to New Orleans?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Well, there was a young man here from Utah, and I was telling him how much I really loved Utah. When you look at all of Utah's statistics, they're really fabulous. Like if you want to live a really long life, go to Utah. [laughter] If you want to look at really good health statistics, go to Utah, right.

And so, where you start is an important point. New Orleans is starting in a difficult place. But I think it's fair to say that, in every urban center in America, and it is certainly true about New Orleans, the issue of safety is the most important issue. So, we just talked about security from manmade and/or natural disasters that could come your way, rebuilding the coast, fortifying the levies, making the building codes right.

But, citizens feeling safe on the streets of New Orleans is critically important. Hence, the aggressive work that you see us doing with the Department of Justice. We have two wonderful people here who have joined us today, who have been helping us a lot with that, reorganizing a police department that has lost its way, a police department that the people are supposed to have faith in and trust in, a police department that is supposed to protect and serve. It needs to get much, much better.

And so, we did a national search for a great police chief. Ronnie Serpas was a kid from New Orleans. He left, and he was the head of the State Police in Washington State for, now, Secretary of Commerce Gary Lott, when he was the Governor there. Then went to Nashville, did a superb job. Brought him home. And he is helping us completely reorganize the New Orleans Police Department.

Simultaneously therewith, we are very aware that you cannot arrest your way out of the complicated problems that are happening on the streets of American cities. The rate of violence and the culture of death is unnatural. We act, in this country, as though it is something that we need to accept. But it has not always been that way. So, you've got to get on the front end of it.

Recreation programs, great schools, afterschool programs, all critical to making sure that the City of New Orleans is safe both on the front end and the back end. And, if we can do those two things, people will flock to the City of New Orleans because it is a glorious place, is one of the great places that the world has to offer. There is no other place, without any insult to the homes that all of you come from, that has an as authentic or unique culture, that celebrates the joy of life, of food, of fun, of family, of faith, of country, all at one time. It's just a spectacular place. And, it needs to be rebuilt, not just for us, but for the country as well.

ALAN BJERGA: Can you update us on the federal review of the New Orleans Police Department? And, why do you think the department cannot reform without federal intervention?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Yes I can. Roy Austin is here from the Department of Justice on behalf of the Attorney General. I thank you so much. And Lynn Overman is with us. You don't always get to choose what you inherit. And I think all of you have seen a lot of the reports about the activity in and out of the police department.

I think the Justice Department was coming anyway. [laughter] At least they thought they were-- And I did too. [laughter] But, I came into a system and a boiler that had been cooking for a long period of time. So the conflict that faced me was, do you push that back and say, "Look, I'm a new mayor. I don't want anybody telling me how to do my business. I think I can fix this thing myself." Or, do you take a real hard look at what is and speak the truth?

You've heard me say this a lot of times. I gave a speech a couple of weeks ago called "Eyes Wide Open." The theory of eyes wide open is, if you tell people the

unabashed truth, smart, reasonable people will do what is necessary to get out of harm's way. And, it's time for New Orleans to see that. And, there's no reason-- We have so many wonderful things that we can brag about-- There's no reason to brag about things that are really not so good.

And so, I made a determination that it would be far better to invite the Justice Department into a partnership with me and put the full weight of the Mayor's office behind this initiative rather than have a hostile attempt to fix something with no cooperation.

Why did I do this? I do this because I talked to a lot of mayors who know a lot more about running cities than I do, who I think are just brilliant people. I talked to Mayor Bloomberg. I talked to Mayor Daley. I talked to Mayor Villaraigosa. I talked to the Mayor of Pittsburgh, who worked under [13:59:40]. I talked to the folks in Los Angeles, who actually were there when this happened. And all of them advised me that it's much, much better if the Mayor really supports it to do it in incredible partnership, because you can get so much more done.

And so, I had a great conversation with the President's staff. I had a great conversation with the Attorney General. And we agreed that we were going to be committed to fixing that department. Because, if we didn't do it together, we did not think it would get done. And, we think that's a much wiser approach to the antagonistic approach that had taken place over the years.

So far, the Department of Justice has been in New Orleans, for the most part, every day. They are embedded in the department right now. As you know, Chief Serpas has completely reorganized the structure of the department. And, when he did that, he actually hired two new civilians to become deputy chiefs, one of which is about four-point-three. And she is now, as a lawyer, the head of the Public Integrity Unit in the department. That's quite a monumental change.

Also, subsequent to that, I ordered the Inspector General and the police monitor into the department, and I ordered the chief to give them every document that they had been seeking for the past two or three years. That is the only way that you're going to fix this department.

There are some wonderful men and women that work there. But that department has lost its way. And you know that, for those of you that are lawyers, if you stand before a jury and, during the [14:00:59] you ask them whether or not they would give any credence to a police officer's testimony, and they say no. That's when you know you've got a real problem.

And there are other ones as well. So, this is one thing that I am certain is going to happen during the next couple of years. And, I'm very appreciative of the work and think that it's really one of our first priorities. Thanks.

ALAN BJERGA: Can you briefly elaborate on how the budget cuts in your city have affected the delivery of services to its citizens?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Yeah, thank you very much. I gave you those talking points before I came. But we found out yesterday that we have, actually, \$12 million more dollars in cuts that we have to make. So officially, we have now come into office with about a \$79 million dollar hole in the budget.

That's a big hole, in terms of size and scale. I know that, for those of you that cover national stories, other states, you see big numbers rolling out of California. You see big numbers rolling out of New York. But, of course, it's all relative. So our budget really is around \$460 million dollars. And, if you have to cut \$75 million out in half a year, you have to double it, in terms of its complete and total impact.

On top of that, the City of New Orleans, like most other political subdivisions, has a balanced budget amendment. So you can't skate it into next year. You might be able to find a couple of things that you can do that with. But, for the most part, you've got to hit your numbers.

So we were forced, not unlike many other cities, but for different reasons, to make some fairly dramatic cuts. And we have done that. It has resulted in us-- in me having to order 14 furlough days for city employees. That's kind of tough, you know. It's an overall 10% pay cut to a system of public employees that don't make, you know, a significant amount of money.

One of the things that we had to do, though, that we thought did not hurt public service so much, was the usage of overtime, which evidently is used in a whole bunch of creative ways in municipal governments these days. And we think that, by really reorganizing how the police department used overtime, the fire department, and everybody else, and we triaged when folks came to work and when they didn't, we could actually reduce that hole fairly significantly, just by better management practices.

On top of that, we have very aggressively renegotiated a bunch of contracts that had been signed over the past eight years, where folks were getting way too much money for the service that they were delivering. And, we have saved significant money while we were doing that.

So, we think that we've kind of dodged a bullet. It always hurts when you make those kinds of dramatic cuts. We have to right size government because we can't spend more money than we take in, at least on the local level. [laughter] And we're going to continue to do that. Thanks.

ALAN BJERGA: We're almost out of time. And thank you again for taking the time to speak with us today. But, before we ask the last question-- and there will be a final question-- we have a couple of important matters to take care of. First, to remind our members and guests of future speakers. On September first, Dr. Christina Romer, Chair

of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, will address the extraordinary challenges and policy actions of the first 20 months of the Obama administration. On September 13th, Reverend David Beckman, the World Food Prize Laureate and President of Bread for the World, will discuss eliminating hunger to people and Congress. And, on September 30th, we'll have Senator John Cornyn, the Chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee and Senator Robert Menendez of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, talking about guessing the elections.

Second, we'd like to present our guest with the traditional and coveted National Press Club mug. [laughter] [applause] And now, for our final question, on a topic that you made a couple allusions to today. And, it's been a big national story the past couple days, and it's probably one of the biggest threats to the aspirations and hopes of New Orleans this year.

I'm speaking, of course, of Minnesota Vikings quarterback Brett Favre. [laughter]

MITCH LANDRIEU: I'm not worried about it.

ALAN BJERGA: Favre announced that he is not retiring, again, yesterday. And, on September 9th, will be lining up at center before-- against the New Orleans Saints in a rematch of last year's NFC Championship title game which, as a Minnesota native, I have seen as a fluke victory from the Saints on their way to their Super Bowl championship. [laughter] So my completely, unbiased question [laughter] would be, how will the Saints handle, in their Super Bowl quest, the riveting offense, the stifling pass rush, and the dominating defense of the Minnesota Vikings on the rematch in September?

MITCH LANDRIEU: Okay, so I'm going to answer that question with a question. Is he really going to show up and play? [laughter] [applause] That would be the first question. And secondly, I just say 24-3. [laughter] [applause]

ALAN BJERGA: Thank you for that prognostication. And thank you for coming today.

[applause]

ALAN BJERGA: We would also like to thank the National Press Club staff, including its Library and Broadcast Operation Center for organizing today's event. And, once again, a shout out for the Gulf Coast shrimp. For more information about joining the National Press Club and on how to acquire a copy of today's program, please go to our website at www.press.org. Thank you once again to the Mayor, to the Senator, to all of our guests today at today's program. This meeting of the National Press Club is adjourned. [gavel]