

Statement of  
**The Honorable Al Franken**

United States Senator  
Minnesota  
June 8, 2010

Opening Statement for "The Risky Business of Big Oil"  
Senator Al Franken

Mr. Jones, I'm deeply sorry for your loss. Thank you for being with us here today.

This oil spill is a tragedy. But this was no freak accident. British Petroleum had one of the worst--if not the worst--safety records in its industry. According to one report, ninety-seven percent of the flagrant safety violations in the entire oil industry in the past 3 years came from two BP refineries. That is amazing.

In fact, just 5 years before the Deepwater Horizon disaster, 15 BP employees died in a separate incident at a refinery in Texas. News reports now tell us that BP's own internal investigations had revealed that, to quote the Washington Post, "the oil company repeatedly disregarded safety and environmental rules and risked a serious accident if it did not change its ways."

This tragedy shows us that our laws aren't doing enough. We need to improve our laws so that bad actors like BP can't just make a business decision to ignore them. We need laws that better incentivize safety. And we need laws that strictly penalize violations, and help the people harmed by those violations. That is why I am a co-sponsor of Senator Menendez's bill, the Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act, and that's why I look forward to learning more about the legislation to be discussed today.

Ultimately, this tragedy is a wake-up call. It's a reminder that we should never have allowed a company with such an egregious safety record to drill in mile-deep water with no plan for responding to a disaster of this magnitude. And moreover, it's a wake-up call that we can't drill ourselves out of our dependence on oil. We need to pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation that transitions our country to clean, renewable energy - and we need it now. You've never seen a wind turbine explode and kill 11 people. You've never seen a 45-day ethanol spill. We need to all think about the broader energy crisis that is driving the demand for oil.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today.