



STATE OF FLORIDA

BILL McCOLLUM
ATTORNEY GENERAL

June 11, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am deeply troubled that some of the most advanced skimmers and other cleanup vessels in the world cannot be utilized to remove the oil that is devastating our Gulf Coast due to the Jones Act. As you likely are aware, the Jones Act (46 U.S.C. § 55102) provides that the transportation of merchandise, and even valueless material, between U.S. points is reserved for U.S.-built, owned, and documented vessels.

It is my understanding, based on news reports of information from your administration and the Coast Guard, that foreign vessels have been unable to offer direct assistance to the Gulf Coast cleanup effort because of the Jones Act. Indeed, the Unified Area Command has treated compliance with the Jones Act as an operational requirement, mandating that the foreign equipment be transferred to U.S. ships, a very time-consuming process that is hindering immediate response. Additional foreign technology, such as skimmers from the Netherlands, is reported to be highly effective in removing oil from seawater and capable of processing large quantities of oily water daily. A limited waiver of the Jones Act would certainly hasten the cleanup effort.

Federal law should not stand in the way of relief to our natural resources and economies. I respectfully ask that the provisions of the Jones Act be waived given the ongoing environmental disaster, as it was waived to assist in response to Hurricane Katrina. The limited use of foreign vessels to aid in the cleanup of the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill will not likely impede U.S. trade and commerce. Indeed, as I have previously urged, every available American skimmer and other cleanup vessels must be brought to the Gulf and put into use. More importantly, vessels with advanced cleanup capabilities should not be turned away during our time of need.

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At yesterday's White House press briefing, your Press Secretary stated that "[i]f there is the need for any type of waiver, that would obviously be granted." Mr. President, the need is here. Oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill has invaded Florida and other Gulf Coast states, threatening our precious natural resources. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of additional valuable resources by temporarily waiving the Jones Act restrictions on foreign skimmers and other cleanup vessels at all sixteen Florida ports for the limited purpose of aiding in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response. I appreciate your consideration of this request. Please let my office know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill McCollum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a long, sweeping tail.

Bill McCollum

cc: Admiral Thad Allen