

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2013

Admiral James Watson
Director, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Director Watson,

We are writing regarding the Department of Interior's pending regulations on offshore blowout preventers (BOPs), which have been discussed in some form or another since the Deepwater Horizon incident.

As you are well aware, BOPs are an integral part of the safety systems on drilling rigs. Since the 2010 spill, many companies have worked to upgrade and improve their equipment with new technologies to make already reliable systems ever stronger. In addition to these individual changes in equipment, the American Petroleum Institute published the 4th Edition of API Standard 53 *Blowout Prevention Equipment Systems for Drilling Wells* in November of 2012. The objective of this standard, and industry actions overall, is to promote personnel safety, public safety, integrity of the drilling equipment and preservation of the environment.

Even as industry moves forward to ensure the reliability of their systems, officials at the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement have hinted at sweeping new rules on the topic. Stakeholders have been on notice for some time now, and as early as April 19th, 2012 Director James Watson wrote:

We need to usher in a new generation of blowout preventers... [W]e will be proposing new rules for how blowout preventers are designed, how they must perform and how they must be maintained over their lifespans.

While improving offshore safety is our mutual goal, we are somewhat concerned that regulators are failing to provide clarity for rig operators, inching towards substantial rules affecting that very same safety equipment that industry is voluntarily upgrading.


Therefore, we write to ask:

1. What is the timing of new regulations on BOPs?
2. What is the expected scope of this rule and how much change is envisioned when regulators discuss a "new generation"?
3. Is the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) currently considering new technological standards that could require retirement of entire existing BOPs?

4. Does BSEE plan to go through the full, standard rulemaking process to allow for stakeholder comment?
5. How would this rule comport with ongoing, voluntary safety upgrades, and is BSEE actively discussing the issue with industry?
6. What timeframe is BSEE considering for implementation of this new rule?
7. How will cost and continuity of industry operations be factored into this rulemaking?

We look forward to your prompt and thorough response to these important questions.

Very respectfully,



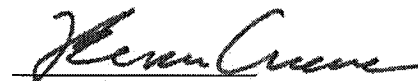
Pete Olson
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress



Marsha Blackburn
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Natural Resources Committee
Member of Congress



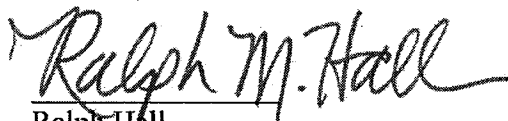
Kevin Cramer
Natural Resources Committee
Member of Congress



Gregg Harper
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress



Ralph Hall
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress



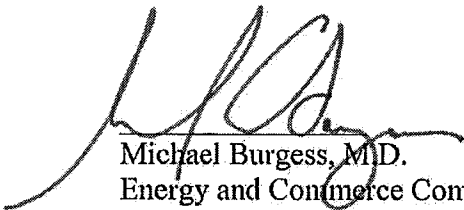
Bob Latta
Energy and Commerce Committee
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Energy and Commerce Committee
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Mr)

Michael Burgess, M.D.
Energy and Commerce Committee
Member of Congress