



Florida House of Representatives
Democratic Office

Franklin Sands
Democratic Leader

Geraldine F. Thompson
Democratic Leader Pro Tempore

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CONTACT: Mark Hollis
(850) 488-9622

**REPRESENTATIVES KEITH FITZGERALD AND RICK KRISEMAN
CALL ON FLORIDA REPUBLICAN LEADERS
TO END FLORIDA'S OIL DRILLING DEBATE**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- In light of the tragedy and loss of life in the Gulf of Mexico, and a subsequent oil spill that now threatens the entire Gulf Coast, state Representatives Keith Fitzgerald (D-Sarasota) and Rick Kriseman (D-St. Petersburg) are calling on Republican Speaker-Designate Dean Cannon and other Republican leaders to put an end to all consideration of oil drilling in state waters, just 3 to 10 miles off Florida's coasts.

"Now is the time to revisit the question of drilling close to Florida's shores," said Representative Fitzgerald. "We call upon the drilling proponents to renounce they're plan. We commend Governor Charlie Crist for recognizing the implications of drilling and hope the proponents have similar wisdom."

Representative Kriseman offered the following statement:

"This is a debate that should have never been started and must now end. We have seen enough. Had this disaster occurred three miles off our coast, our beautiful state and our economy would be in ruin, our future in peril. Representative Fitzgerald and I, along with many of our colleagues, experts in the field, and

millions of Floridians, have sounded this alarm for over a year now. It's time for Representative Dean Cannon to listen.”

On April 20, an explosion and fire on a drilling rig left 11 workers missing and presumed dead. The rig sank two days later about 50 miles off the Louisiana coast. The resulting oil spill near New Orleans is now the largest oil spill containment operation in history.

Earlier today, Rear Adm. Mary E. Landry of the United States Coast Guard announced that scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have concluded that oil is leaking at the rate of 5,000 barrels a day, a rate five times what was previously estimated. Officials say that it may take three months or longer to contain the spill.

According to federal officials, wind patterns may push the spill into the coast of Louisiana as soon as Friday night, prompting consideration of urgent measures to protect coastal wildlife. Part of the oil slick is only 16 miles offshore and closing in on the Mississippi River Delta.

Residents on Florida's Gulf Coast are already experiencing the impacts of this spill, the outcome of which is expected to worsen.

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