

Questions from Rep. Graves for Ms. Meg Bankston, Executive Director, Parishes Advocating for Coastal Endurance(PACE), Baton Rouge, LA

1 Can you explain how Louisiana would benefit from removing the cap on GOMESA revenue?

Lifting the cap would significantly benefit Louisiana in several ways.

1. Louisiana would receive a larger share of revenue, potentially bringing in hundreds of millions of additional dollars each year. This revenue can be used for crucial state and local needs in regards to coastal restoration and protection. The state has constitutionally dedicated these funds to the CPRA Trust fund and they have very specific eligible uses.
2. More GOMESA funds would lead to increased investment in local infrastructure and environmental projects, creating jobs and boosting the economy. The enhanced ability to protect and restore the coast will benefit industries such as fishing, tourism and energy which are heavily dependent on a stable and healthy coastal environment.
3. With additional funds, the state can invest in in long-term sustainability initiatives including flood protection systems as well as Marsh creation projects that help us in making the state more resilient to climate change, sea level rise, frequent storm systems and other environmental challenges.

Overall, removing the cap on GOMESA would provide Louisiana with additional resources to address both immediate need and long-term challenges benefitting our working coast economically and environmentally.

As a representative of the 20 coastal parishes, how do parishes view the offshore energy industry? Does this impact some of the restoration initiatives parishes are currently working on?

As mentioned, Louisiana is unique in the fact that we are a working coast. The offshore energy industry are our partners in helping to sustain our working coast. The industry is not a hinderance. Without it, Louisiana would not be fueling the nation and creating jobs that go well beyond offshore energy production.

An additional source of revenue the coastal parishes receive comes from settlement funds from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, what barriers exist for parishes trying to access these dollars? How s it different from GOMESA revenue?

The parishes are able to pull down settlement funds from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill from Treasury. The largest barrier is the fact that this was set up as a grant program. Actually being able to pull these funds down in a timely manner, and receiving approval from them on projects and initiatives that Treasury is unfamiliar with is exhausting. While a planning effort is good, the amount of paperwork and edits to a Multi-year implementation program is strenuous and unclear. In turn, these projects end up costing more due to inefficiencies with Treasury. The GOMESA revenue that comes to the parishes is not a grant based program. The parishes receive the money directly and are able to allocate it to

projects that they sit fit in a timely manner. This has worked extremely well and had cut the red tape surrounding federal funds.

What actions have the parishes taken to get coastal restoration projects funded in the face of federal government inaction or bureaucracy?

Several actions have been taken by the parishes to get coastal restoration funded. A few parishes have taxed themselves, and allocated that specific tax to coastal restoration and protection. An example of this is Terrebonne Parish, who passed a tax specifically for a project that the USACE was not funding - "Morganza to the Gulf." Hurricane Barry brought storm surges of 9-11 feet to the Terrebonne and Lafourche areas, levels not seen since 2005 during Hurricane Rita. Thanks to state and local investment since 2005, numerous improvements have been made to the levee systems protecting these communities with dramatic effects. In 2005, Hurricane Rita resulted in the flooding of 11,000 homes. In Hurricane Barry, with a similar storm surge, only 12 homes flooded.

The state of Louisiana has invested well over \$1Billion with surplus funding over the past 15 years. This funding was able to help the state set up a vast coastal program, as well as fund several projects that help in making our state and parishes more resilient.