

**Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy
and Mineral Resources Oversight Hearing
1324 Longworth House Office Building July 27,
2023 10:00 AM**

*"Safeguarding American Jobs and Economic Growth: Examining the Future of the Offshore
Leasing Program."*

Questions from Rep. Grijalva for Mr. Justin Solet, Gulf South Advocate

1. The federal government provides \$20.5 billion per year in subsidies to the oil and gas industry, including direct subsidies and indirect subsidies such as tax breaks and below-market lease and royalty rates. According to the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. spends \$649 billion dollars a year on fossil fuel subsidies when the externalized costs of fossil fuel production are accounted for, including the health, environmental, and climate costs. Could you please elaborate on what these external costs look like for your community? How are they experienced by Gulf communities?

A recent peer-reviewed study identifies the public health harms as well as the disproportionate impacts on communities at each stage of the coal, oil, and gas lifecycles – extraction, processing, transport, and combustion. It was authored by experts from Greenpeace USA, Salem State University, and Taproot Earth and published in Energy Research & Social Science <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629623001640>

The publication draws from 200+ academic studies which reveal a consistent pattern: fossil fuel pollution is associated with asthma, birth complications, cancer, respiratory disease, heart conditions, and premature mortality. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and poor communities bear a disproportionate burden of these harms. These same communities are hit hardest by the impacts of the climate crisis.

Additionally, the study concludes that policies solely focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions without reducing fossil fuel usage could fail to reduce local air and water pollution, fail to alleviate public health harms, and end up perpetuating the racially inequitable impacts of the fossil fuel economy. Black, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and low-income populations already have an elevated burden of exposure to air pollutants that can harm the respiratory system known as PM2.5, a pattern that is consistent across nearly all emission source types. Poorly designed climate policies could concentrate this pollution in community “hotspots” even as overall carbon emissions decline.

2. Could you please elaborate on the unique challenges and barriers Tribal nations face in participating in decision making around offshore development? Do Tribal nations receive the same benefits as state and local governments from offshore development?

This article details the challenges that the United Houma Nation has faced in receiving the same benefits and local governments from offshore development:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/5/louisiana-wetlandsenvironmentclimatechange.html>

In short, tribes—especially state-recognized tribes like mine—do not receive the same tax benefits of offshore development. We often do not receive the jobs. As Mr. Danos said during the hearing, oftentimes people are coming in from out of state for offshore jobs. We don't receive the same amount of clean up and remediation money. And our land and way of life is being taken away by the offshore oil and gas industry.

3. Were there any other issues or questions that you were not able to fully address or respond to during the hearing? If so, please elaborate here:

- The delay of leasing is not causing job losses in the Gulf of Mexico. There are 1,600 existing offshore leases.
- Why is it important not to link offshore wind to offshore oil?
 - I would like to reiterate that offshore oil and gas and offshore CCS are incompatible with offshore wind development because of the conflicts between pipelines and transmission cables. Unless we stop permitting new pipelines in the ocean floor, my community will continue to be stuck with dirty energy while the rest of the country moves on and takes advantage of the jobs in the new offshore wind economy. Please see this comment letter for more information: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-c4P44xVeRNgs-CDb-fnNqjX1Bg_ZwrPU_04VV2pZt4/edit
 - We recommend that House Natural Resources read and adopt the “Principles For A Just Transition In Offshore Wind Energy:” https://taproot.earth/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/JustTransition-OffshoreWindEnergy_v2.pdf
- [To expand my answer about the impact of fossil fuel lobbyists on the state of Louisiana, Air Products—an out of state company—hired lobbyists who were past representatives of](#)

Louisiana to thwart the will of the people, who were pushing for carbon capture regulation and moratoria. Air Products hired 25 lobbyists for the 2023 session alone: <https://www.wwno.org/coastal-desk/2023-04-13/this-company-has-hired-25-lobbyists-for-the-louisiana-legislative-session>.

- Recently the **Louisiana attorney general hired lawyers for EPA negotiations who were also representing chemical firm at center of inquiry.** <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/aug/10/cancer-alley-louisiana-attorney-general-epa-lawyers-formosa>
- Louisiana Sen. Sharon Hewitt has history of passing bills to benefit oil and gas and her husband, who works for the oil and gas industry.
- To expand on my answer about who holds the power when it comes to people or the oil and gas industry, representatives of Louisiana has for decades been the rubber stamp to projects that endanger the lives of their constituents.
- To expand my answer about which technologies and expertise the Global South should have access to, I'm referring specifically to wind, solar, and green technologies.
 - Global North should be funding Global South countries to transition to justly renewable energy, as well as providing Loss and Damage financing for nations that are unable to adapt to the climate crisis. The United States is the world's largest historic emitter of greenhouse gasses. We have a debt to pay.