

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 25, 2022

Dr. Beverly Wright  
Executive Director  
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Dear Dr. Wright,

I am writing to thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources at the oversight hearing on Thursday, January 20th, 2022 to present testimony on, *"What More Gulf of Mexico Oil and Gas Leasing Means for Achieving U.S. Climate Targets."*

Your testimony was helpful in defining the Committee's understanding of the issue. We appreciate your time and insight and are grateful for your contribution to the Committee's work.

While many questions were asked during the hearing, the Subcommittee has additional questions, attached, for your reply. Please provide your written responses to: Charles Olsen, Subcommittee Clerk, no later than Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Committee Rule 3(o) requires that responses be submitted within 10 business days of the hearing.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Charles Olsen, Policy Aide, at [Charles.Olsen@mail.house.gov](mailto:Charles.Olsen@mail.house.gov). Thank you for your important contribution to the Committee's work.

Sincerely,



Alan S. Lowenthal  
Chair  
Subcommittee on  
Energy and Mineral Resources

Enclosures: Questions for the Record

## Questions for the Record by Democrat Members

### Questions from Rep. Lowenthal:

1. Dr. Wright, during the hearing you were not given an adequate chance to respond to the questions and statements leveraged against you. Would you like to respond to anything said to you by a Republican member of congress during today's hearing?

### Questions from Rep. Huffman:

1. Dr. Wright, in November, the Biden Administration made 80 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico available to the fossil fuel industry for leasing, and companies ended up purchasing leasing covering 1.7 million acres. What was your response to this sale, and do you think an adequate environmental review and analysis was completed for the lease sale?



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Contact: [DeepSouth@SKDKNick.com](mailto:DeepSouth@SKDKNick.com)

**Response to questions from Rep. Lowenthal:**

*Dr. Wright, during the hearing you were not given an adequate chance to respond to the questions and statements leveraged against you. Would you like to respond to anything said to you by a Republican member of congress during today's hearing?*

First, I live with racism every day and have for as long as I can remember. It's insulting to try and deny the systemic steps that have been taken to ensure the communities most impacted by pollution are communities of color. Cherry-picking data by only looking at white parishes where a small number of people live is not an accurate representation of the suffering that has gone on for so long in Cancer Alley. The facts and data are clear, there has been a disproportionate impact of pollution on African American communities in Louisiana, and race is a primary determinate in where polluting facilities are placed.

The states' own demographics show that African Americans are overrepresented in the pollution corridor. The GIS maps show that 80 percent of African Americans in the state live within three miles of a cancer-causing facility. This isn't an accident, it's the result of skewed decision-making and environmental racism.

**Response to questions from Rep. Huffman:**

*Dr. Wright, in November, the Biden Administration made 80 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico available to the fossil fuel industry for leasing, and companies ended up purchasing leasing covering 1.7 million acres. What was your response to this sale, and do you think an adequate environmental review and analysis was completed for the lease sale?*

I don't think there was an adequate environmental review, and since our hearing, a federal judge has reversed the decision. Our position remains that the entire federal leasing process should be reviewed to better account for its impact on all communities. Until the administration has had time to review the system, they must extend the pause on new leases.

Given the state we are now in where there is precious little time to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to stave off the worst effects of climate change, it is critical that committee members consider solutions for meeting US climate targets. I strongly recommend the following:

1. Require health protections for communities harmed by the extraction, transport, burning, and disposal of fossil fuels;
2. prohibit racially disproportionate pollution burdens;
3. expand the reach of the Superfund responsible parties to compensate the cleanup and plugging of abandoned wells, as well as the regular monitoring of all existing wells;



*February 3, 2022*

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4. stand up an expert federal team for disaster planning, preparedness and response on oil spills and other industrial hazards resulting from hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico;
5. hold companies accountable for abandoned wells in the Gulf of Mexico; and
6. establish compliance with US climate targets for the oil and gas industry.