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## House Republicans subpoena documents about Obama administration's deep-water moratorium

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**Bruce Alpert, Times-Picayune**

By

WASHINGTON -- In a major escalation of the battle over energy policy between House Republicans and the Obama administration, a House panel Wednesday voted to subpoena documents about a report recommending a moratorium on deep-water drilling. Democrats denounced the move as a fishing expedition by Republicans unhappy with the administration's decision to pause deep-water drilling after the **2010 BP oil spill**.



Jonathan Tilove, The Times-Picayune

Reps. John Fleming, left, and Jeff Landry before the House Natural Resources Committee hearing last year on the residual impact of the drilling moratorium.

The party-line vote by the **House Natural Resources Committee** to issue subpoenas was 23-17. The subpoenas approved by the committee's GOP majority also seek material related to a proposed rule to limit environmental damage from Appalachian coal mining.

"I am thrilled this committee is using its oversight authority to require the administration to own up to their actions and fully explain why the moratorium was an appropriate response to the Macondo blowout," said Rep. **Jeff Landry**, R-New Iberia, a committee member.

At issue is a Department of Interior report issued by the administration five weeks after the spill that suggested a panel of outside experts agreed with a recommendation for a six-week moratorium. Eight of the experts said later they didn't agree with the moratorium and the report was later corrected.

Department of Interior Inspector General Mary Kendall attributed the mistake to last-minute editing by a White House official.

Kendall said the report concludes that while the report "could have been more clearly worded," the department "has not definitely violated" the Information Quality Act, which bars federal agencies from

releasing deliberately misleading information.

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said the administration has refused to provide certain documents and some material it provided was heavily redacted.

"Therefore, we have been left with no other choice but to move forward with subpoenas," he said.

Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., the top Democrat on the Natural Resources Committee, said the subpoenas and "escalating" requests for information "seem to be more about harassing and tying up the Administration rather than finding answers to important questions."

"If you need something to investigate, we have some ideas," Markey said. "Oil company profiteering and unsafe drilling practices cost billions per year and even cost lives. And yet despite much higher stakes, the majority continues to ignore these issues."

Landry and Rep. John Fleming, R-Minden, said that the loss of jobs caused by the moratorium and subsequent slow down in permitting is an issue that deserves congressional oversight.

"Jobs were lost and our domestic energy supply cut," Fleming said. "That's why there must be subpoenas. It's time the administration answer to the people on this matter."

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