

Five years after the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, all eyes are once again on the Gulf Coast as we watch news reports of devastated wildlife, environment and economy. It's heartbreaking to see the damage that humans can do when plans go wrong.

Capping the well and drilling relief wells may stop this gusher, but we're no closer to a comprehensive energy plan, and that troubles me.

President Obama has been successful in getting some concessions from BP, including the creation of a \$20 billion escrow account to cover damages and losses to local residents. He has been less successful in imposing a moratorium on deepwater drilling, a move I believe is necessary to make sure a similar event doesn't happen again.

In Washington, Democratic members of Congress have moved to secure our own waters. Congressman John Garamendi (D-Walnut Creek) introduced the West Coast Ocean Protection Act in May, and I'm an original cosponsor of that legislation. The bill would instate a permanent moratorium on new offshore oil and natural gas drilling from platforms in federal waters off the West Coast.

I also believe that now is the time to start moving toward more alternative energy sources. It may be hard to focus on this need during a crisis, but disasters like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will continue to happen until we reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

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