

CHARLIE MELANCON
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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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January 12, 2007

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

As the Committee considers the Continuing Resolution that will provide funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2007, I respectfully request that an anomaly be addressed with respect to the administration of the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP).

As you are aware, Section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-58) established the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, which authorizes funds to be distributed to Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas producing states for the purposes of coastal restoration and mitigation of the impacts of OCS oil and gas activities.

Under the CIAP, the Secretary of the Interior is required to distribute to producing states and coastal political subdivisions \$250 million for each of the fiscal years 2007 through 2010. This money will be shared among Alabama, Alaska, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas and will be allocated to each producing State and eligible coastal subdivision based upon allocation formulas prescribed by the Act.

Before any of the funds can be disbursed, the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) faces substantial administrative responsibilities: determining the funding allocations, reviewing and approving coastal impact assistance plans, conducting an Environmental Assessment, to name but a few. Although the MMS was allotted one-time funds in 2006 to begin the work necessary to implement the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, the agency has stated that it requires additional funds to continue this vital work.

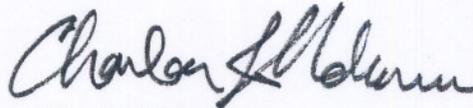
The current Continuing Resolution authorized no funds for this purpose. As a result, the MMS's vital work on this critical component of Gulf Coast reconstruction has drawn to a halt. The FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill as passed by the House of

Representatives authorized the Secretary of the Interior to utilize one percent of the funds authorized by Section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 for the costs of administering the program. The FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill as reported by the Senate Committee on Appropriations authorized the Secretary of the Interior to utilize three percent of the funds authorized by Section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 for the costs of administering the program. This is an issue that would have been addressed under the regular order and I hope that it can still be addressed.

I respectfully request that the next Continuing Resolution address this problem either by providing the Secretary with the authority to utilize other agency resources or to use a small portion of the funds directed by Section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to efficiently administer the Coastal Impact Assistance Program.

I cannot emphasize how important the Coastal Impact Assistance Program is to Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. As the region struggles to recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2005, any delay in fully implementing this program stands as an obstacle to the assured safety of millions of Gulf Coast residents. I respectfully request that the Committee act to address this problem with all possible haste.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charlie Melancon".

Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress