

Written by Sen. Tom Harkin
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) today joined 54 of his Senate Democratic Colleagues in writing to British Petroleum (BP) CEO Tony Hayward calling on the company to set aside \$20 billion in a special account to be used to pay for economic damages and clean-up costs stemming from the recent oil spill in the Gulf Coast. In the letter, the Senators note that damages and liability from the spill may not be evident for years to come and call on BP to establish the fund in order to ensure financial security for persons and businesses harmed by the spill. The Senators requested a response to this letter no later than Friday, June 18. A PDF of the letter can be found [here](#).

“Every day we hear more and more stories from the Gulf of Mexico of people losing their livelihoods and our natural treasures being destroyed, all while BP is considering billions of dollars in dividend payments to shareholders,” **said Harkin.** “As Iowans learned two years ago after the floods that damaged much of our state, recovery from a disaster is an expensive and drawn out process. We must hold BP accountable and ensure they put aside these funds to help the Gulf Coast clean up and recover after what is easily the worst man-made environmental disaster in our nation’s history.”

According to the letter, after the Exxon Valdez tanker spilled more than 11 million gallons of oil into Alaska’s Prince William Sound, damages totaled more than \$7 billion. Although Exxon continued making massive profits after the accident, it fought liability at every step and ultimately paid far less than the billions of dollars worth of damages it had caused.

Tomorrow, Harkin will chair a Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing to examine the effects of the BP oil spill and remediation efforts on public health and what can be done to minimize the negative impacts. Witnesses and committee members will discuss in detail the many concerns and unknowns regarding the health effects of the oil spill on the workers, the general public and the food supply in the Gulf.