

## Oil Disaster Update from the Mississippi Center for Justice

July 2, 2010



### Oil Hits Shore in Mississippi



With oil now washing ashore on Mississippi's beaches, the urgency of our response to the disaster escalates. Our staff and volunteers are committed to ensuring that low wealth and other vulnerable residents of the Coast are treated equitably in the claims, recovery and coastal redevelopment planning processes.

Tuesday, June 22, the managing attorney of our Gulf Coast office, John Jopling, joined me and legal advocates from other Gulf States convened an audio press conference to discuss the need for legal assistance to marginalized communities as part of the disaster recovery plan. Journalists from NPR, Gannett News Services and the Associated Press, among others, attended the briefing. USA Today featured our story during the weekend. In addition to highlighting the barriers faced by low-income communities, we used the opportunity to make a direct plea to Kenneth Feinberg, recently appointed by the President Obama to establish an independent claims facility, to include Gulf state legal aid advocates in the design and implementation of the claims system. We are encouraged by the response we have received from Mr. Feinberg and will keep you posted on our overtures to his team.



Later last week, we welcomed more than 20 volunteer attorneys and organizations including Asian Americans for Change, Boat People SOS, Mercy Housing, the National Alliance of Vietnamese American Service Agencies, and Vietnamese American Bar Association of Northern California as co-hosts of a free community legal education event. The team worked in Biloxi on Friday, June 25, before traveling to Louisiana and Alabama for similar clinics held Saturday and Sunday. With their indispensable help, we have begun to overcome language and cultural barriers to help Vietnamese Americans gain access to the recovery process. During the course of the three days, this team served more than 100 people and is already planning follow-up trips to the Gulf Coast.



The American Lawyer featured the article in its online publication. We will participate in another claims fair July 8.

The Mississippi Center for Justice continues its search for funding to support a project lead to chair our oil disaster recovery efforts. I appreciate any support that you can provide, including connections to other organizations or

foundations that support this type of long-term work. We are committed to this project and thank you for support of our ongoing endeavors to establish racial and economic justice for all Mississippians.

Standing together for Mississippi and the entire Gulf region,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Bergmark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martha Bergmark  
President