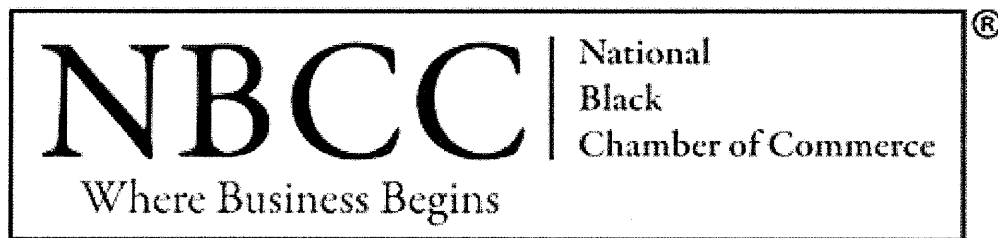


**Testimony of
Harry C. Alford**

**On Behalf of the
National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC)**

**Before the House Committee on Oversight and Government
Reform**

Thursday, February 10, 2011



The National Black Chamber of Commerce
1350 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 405
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-6888
<http://www.nationalbcc.org/>

I would like to thank Chairman Issa and all the distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to speak before you. On behalf of the National Black Chamber of Commerce and the 100,000 Black owned businesses that our organization represents, I thank you for your hard work and continued leadership. The topic of today's hearing, "Regulatory Impediments to Job Creation" is a matter of great importance and I applaud this committee for starting much needed dialogue on such an issue.

As we all know the administration, congress and the media have been debating how to get our economy back on track and spark sustainable job growth. As the economy begins to show signs of life we also recognize the fragile nature of our situation and understand that excessive constraints by the government can undermine the business sector and the entrepreneurial spirit of America.

One of the most egregious burdens that I want to first mention is the Gulf moratorium imposed by the federal government as a result of the BP oil spill. With this moratorium the government has indicated that all U.S. energy companies will be lumped together and penalized for the actions of one company. As you know under this policy America's energy companies will not have the opportunity to buy new offshore drilling leases in the Gulf for the foreseeable future.

I have visited Louisiana and have talked with those who have been devastated by the spill; make no mistake I understand the environmental and economic damage caused by this tragic incident and I fully appreciate why the moratorium was initially put in place. Yet in the months following we have learned that this accident was caused by one bad actor in an otherwise responsible industry.

As we know too well, BP's safety record has been stained for many years and it's the responsibility of our government to appropriately address BP's long history of negligence. I have included with this testimony a graphic which clearly demonstrates the extent of BP's irresponsibility and lengthy record of safety violations. I think we can all acknowledge however that the government's actions should not punish those that follow the law, implement industry best practices and have demonstrated sterling safety records.

According to a study last year by Joseph R. Mason, PhD, the six-month offshore drilling moratorium cost the country \$5 billion in economic activity and 19,500 jobs.¹ The moratorium adds insult to injury and will prolong the economic damage seen in the Gulf. Now is the time to dust ourselves off and get back to work. We must learn from this incident and not be afraid to move forward with domestic energy production.

The longer we stall energy development, the longer the Gulf States will have to wait to create high paying jobs and benefit from new investment. The reality is we need jobs now. A moratorium will not help the American people or the American economy get moving again; rather, this policy decision will give foreign countries and foreign businesses a competitive advantage and prevent the advancements that will make our industries stronger.

Another area of overzealous regulation can be seen in the continued pursuit by the Environmental Protection Agency to impose greenhouse gas mandates. The EPA has gone

¹Dr. Joseph R. Mason, "Critique of the Inter-Agency Economic Report Estimating the Economic Effects of the Deepwater Drilling Moratorium on the Gulf Coast Economy", accessed at: <http://www.saveusenergyjobs.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Dr.-Mason-Critique-of-Administrations-Report.pdf>

beyond the intended scope of their authority and implemented far reaching policies by invoking the Clean Air Act (CAA) to defend their actions. This unprecedented expansion of power at the EPA is sending the wrong signals to the business community. According to the Senate report "EPA's Anti-Industrial Policy: Threatening Jobs and America's Manufacturing Base" nearly 800,000 jobs are at risk due to EPA greenhouse gas proposals.²

Overreach by the agency has already created a maze of red tape for businesses both large and small. And it looks as if this regulation will not stop anytime soon; EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson recently reaffirmed that the administration continues to oppose any congressional plans that would curb the scope of the agency's greenhouse gas regulations.

The current state of EPA rulemaking will increase the financial burden on businesses and as we all know, limited resources translates into fewer jobs and higher prices for consumers. The impact will be especially hard on the energy sector and will disproportionately affect communities of color as African-American and Hispanic households spend a greater percentage of their income on energy. For many families in these communities higher energy prices creates some difficult choices between keeping the lights on and other expenses such as healthcare, food and housing.

Furthermore minority small businesses facing higher electricity and transportation costs are also feeling the pinch. This added financial strain can often result in small businesses cutting salaries, benefits and even jobs. It appears now is the time for Congress to lead and seriously consider a rollback of EPA's onerous regulations.

Reducing emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change is a very real challenge for the U.S. and the global community. There is no question we need to take proactive steps that will reduce our carbon footprint and make our environment cleaner. And yes we do need some reasonable regulations and a watchful eye from our government but the current onslaught of heavy business regulations is unsustainable, especially at a time when Washington looks to get our businesses back on track.

We must look to energy efficient technologies and cost-effective approaches to GHG reductions. Tapping into wind energy, clean burning energy sources such as natural gas and investing in cutting edge biofuels will play an important role to the long-term reductions in emissions. These are just a few technologies that our businesses communities are working on. It is these ideas that will allow our economy to prosper while also protecting our air and environment.

Throughout my career I have had the good fortune to work for several Fortune 100 companies. During this time I witnessed how the heavy hand of regulation can suppress business expansion and job growth. We must consider the financial impact of regulations on small and minority-owned businesses and we must transform America into a haven for free enterprise. Today I feel as though we are consistently squandering potential opportunities because of smothering regulations. According to the U.S. Department of Labor 13.9 million Americans are unemployed

² U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Report "EPA's Anti-Industrial Policy: Threatening Jobs and America's Manufacturing Base", September 28, 2010, accessed at: http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=3ede3e93-813f-4449-97e6-0d6eb54fbc9e

and for African Americans the unemployment rate stands at 16.5 percent.³ I believe our business leaders are spending too much time, energy and resources dealing with regulatory burdens that restrict their business's ability to look forward and grow.

As I stated early, I thank the committee for starting this dialogue, I truly believe this discussion is vital to the decision making process of our leaders here in Washington and to the development of smart policies that will benefit all our American workers. I thank the members for their time and look forward to answering any of their questions.

###

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age", January 2011, accessed at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t02.htm>

President/CEO Harry C. Alford:

In less than a decade, NBCC President/CEO and co-founder Harry C. Alford has established himself as perhaps the nation's preeminent champion of African American business empowerment. From a visionary concept of what Blacks need to do to fully seize their place in the economic mainstream, Mr. Alford has built a global organization that has earned a place at the table in the White House and at the top levels of Corporate America.

As the intellectual and spiritual linchpin of the NBCC, Mr. Alford has been responsible for opening doors that have led to billions of dollars in new business for Black owned firms throughout the nation. His courage and leadership have been noted by all in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His relentless energy and advocacy is helping forge international business opportunities for African Americans and emerging entrepreneurs in Africa, the Caribbean, South America and the rest of the Black Diaspora. For this work he was formally named a Cultural Ambassador by the US State Department. A native of California, Mr. Alford has made his mark at the highest levels of both the private and public sectors. After earning top honors as Company Commander in the Army's Officer Candidate School class (OC3-72), Mr. Alford put his leadership skills to work in a series of key sales and executive positions at Fortune 100 companies such as Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson and the Sara Lee Corporation. Mr. Alford has led large trade missions to Brazil, Ghana, Kenya and various nations in the Caribbean. Recently, he helped establish the French African Diaspora Chamber of Commerce in Paris, France. The birth and growth of the National Black Chamber of Commerce is consistent with the dynamic growth of African American owned firms in the United States – the fastest growing segment in the nation per the US Census Bureau.

Mr. Alford is an award winning columnist for the National Newspaper Publishers Association and consults and speaks on business matters to groups and agencies throughout the nation. He proudly serves on the NNPA Foundation Board of Directors. He is an active member of the Board of Directors of the US Chamber of Commerce where he chairs the Regulatory Affairs Committee. He is a member of the 2008 Health Sector Assembly which is a think tank of national leaders concerned about healthcare. As a consultant, he has developed business models tailored to specific corporations and public agencies. Mr. Alford is regularly called upon by Congress to testify on various legislative initiatives related to small business development, the Gulf Coast rebuilding, e-commerce, healthcare, energy, tax reform and global trade issues. He received national recognition while delivering testimony concerning the current Cap and Trade Energy debate. Mr. and Mrs. Alford reside in Maryland and have two sons who were scholar athletes at the University of Maryland.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name: HARRY C. ALFORD

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2008. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

NONE

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

NATIONAL BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
PRESIDENT/CEO

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2008, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

NONE

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Hy C. Alford

Date:

2/8/11