



ASHTON J. HAYWARD  
MAYOR

February 14, 2017

The Honorable Richard Corcoran  
Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives  
420 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Thank you again for finding time to meet with me when I was in Tallahassee last week. I hope to have an opportunity to talk to you again about issues impacting Pensacola and Northwest Florida as the legislative session unfolds.

I applaud your efforts to ensure that 75 percent of the payments to the State of Florida pursuant to the "Settlement Agreement Between the Gulf States and the BP Entities with Respect to Economic and Other Claims Arising from the Deepwater Horizon Incident" will be transferred to a trust fund that will be administered for the benefit of the eight disproportionately affected counties. As you continue to work with the House Select Committee on Triumph Gulf Coast to determine how those funds will be allocated and what activities will be eligible for funding, I encourage you to prioritize local decision-making over state regulation and to leave specific decisions to the discretion of those closest to the areas impacted by the oil spill.

Under the proposed amendments to the Gulf Coast Economic Corridor Act being considered by the Select Committee on Triumph Gulf Coast, payments made by BP pursuant to the settlement agreement will go to the Triumph Gulf Coast Trust Fund. Expenditure of those funds will be subject to the approval of the Legislative Budget Commission and Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. While that proposal would reinforce the principle of responsible government by creating a path for oversight of specific projects and programs in spending plans, it does little to reinforce the principle of limited government because it adds additional layers of review and favors state regulation over local decision-making.

In comments he made about his efforts to get the RESTORE Act passed, Senator Richard Shelby said:

"I have always believed that, when it comes to government, putting more control in the hands of state and local communities — instead of Washington—will produce optimal results for taxpayers. Communities affected by the oil spill know better than federal bureaucrats where money is needed most for their economic and ecological recoveries."

Keeping funds closer to the communities impacted by the oil spill is always a better choice, and the RESTORE Act should serve as a model for allocating settlement payments made to the Gulf Coast

Trust Fund. A key provision of the RESTORE Act is that, in addition to defining what activities are eligible for funding, it defines a formula for distributing funds among the Gulf States. That provision was further refined by the eight disproportionately affected counties in Florida to ensure that each county was guaranteed its fair share of the available funding.

I recommend that the Select Committee consider adding a provision to the draft bill seeking to amend the Gulf Coast Economic Corridor Act that would guarantee a fair share distribution of the funds to the eight disproportionately affected counties and the cities within them. An agreed upon distribution formula has already been established by those counties for funds provided pursuant to the RESTORE Act. The formula used to calculate local option sales tax distributions could serve as the basis for determining what percentage of the revenue allocated to the counties would be allocated to the cities. Regardless of the final distribution formula, the point I want to stress is that cities must be guaranteed a seat at the table.

A distribution formula would ensure equitable sharing of the proceeds among the communities most impacted by the oil spill, it would be in keeping with the manner in which other BP settlement funds have been allocated and it would provide a measure of certainty and stability for local governments as they develop projects and spending plans.

I welcome your feedback and look forward to working with you on this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Ashton J. Hayward  
Mayor  
City of Pensacola

CC: The Honorable Doug Broxson, Florida Senate  
The Honorable Clay Ingram, Florida House of Representatives  
The Honorable Frank White, Florida House of Representatives