

## LETTER: Gaetz's Vision

2011-01-31

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill changed the face of Northwest Florida in April of 2010. Our legislative delegation has been very involved in many discussions about what we need to do. We have appreciated their time and attention. In a step forward, Senator Gaetz has incorporated the many ideas into state legislation that will put some decisive action into improving our economy.

The Oil Spill Recovery Act filed by Senator Gaetz offers incentives to attract businesses, create jobs, and diversify our economy to further protect the area in the future. Among other provisions, this bill offers targeted economic incentives for businesses that relocate to the affected areas from other states and spurs economic diversification through a \$10 million appropriation. The bill also allocates three-fourths of any fines or settlements collected from BP be directed to the 7 counties of coastal Northwest Florida most affected by the oil spill. [Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf and Franklin]

Senator Gaetz's focus on allocating the funding to the affected areas and earmarking funds for economic diversification will help galvanize the area from future tourism-related disasters. We have long advocated that northwest Florida could be the heart of aerospace and defense research and development, a catalyst for health sciences industries, and fertile ground for innovative energy and environment opportunities. The funding created in this legislation will allow Okaloosa County and other Northwest Florida Counties to create the kind of economic development network Central Florida has experienced with its high tech corridor.

With a new business-focused approach to state government and the economic incentives in the Oil Spill Recovery Act, Northwest Florida is poised to not only meet the future, but to begin to shape the future of Florida. The Economic Development Council serving Okaloosa County works every day to bring business and opportunity to our area and applauds Senator Don Gaetz for his vision of sustained growth.

- LARRY SASSANO

Economic Development Council serving Okaloosa County