Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the 96 member institutions of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership, I am writing to ask your support for including the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources Act (CLEAR) in the oil spill legislative package you are preparing for floor consideration.

A central recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy was the “establishment of an Ocean Policy Trust Fund in the U.S. Treasury, composed of unallocated federal revenues from outer Continental Shelf oil and gas activities, plus new revenues from any new activities approved in federal waters, to support the nation’s new coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy.” As you know, President Obama signed an executive order this week establishing a National Ocean Policy, so it would be a critical blow to that effort to lose this opportunity to fund the implementation of this new ocean policy.

One example of how this funding is essential for protecting our ocean and coastal communities is the CLEAR Act provision to support the Integrated Ocean and Coastal Observing System. The underfunding of this program over the past several years through the appropriations process has hindered our ability to build and operate a robust ocean observing system in the Gulf of Mexico. Consequently we have been unable to accurately detect, track and forecast the oil spill and its effects in the Gulf of Mexico. We have been effectively flying blind with regards to where millions of gallons of subsurface oil and dispersants are located, and will continue to face this problem when hurricanes move through the Gulf and re-suspend the oil into the water column from the sediment below.

The nation has benefited from revenues from the oil and gas industry for decades. While some of those funds have been reallocated for land conservation through the Land and Water Conservation Fund – the ocean has not benefited from the revenues generated within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). We hope that you can rectify this inequity by supporting the CLEAR Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Gagosian, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Consortium for Ocean Leadership