

**Statement of Mr. Reggie Dupre
Executive Director, Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District**

**Before the
United States Senate
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**

Legislative Hearing on the FAIR Act of 2013 (S. 1273)

July 23, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Reggie Dupre. I am currently the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District in Houma, Louisiana. I would like to thank Senator Landrieu for allowing me to speak before you and for her tireless efforts for the citizens of Louisiana. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here. Today I will speak with you about my experiences in guiding legislation on the state level for dedication of offshore revenues, my current role of implementing large scale protection and restoration projects, and finally my experience growing up in a coastal community which is literally washing away every day from the Gulf of Mexico's intrusion on the coastal parishes of Louisiana.

Prior to becoming the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District, I served as a Louisiana State Senator and was Chairman of the Louisiana Senate Natural Resources Committee. My district covered all of the coastal areas of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. These two parishes have experienced coastal erosion rates higher than anywhere in the United States. In late 2005, I was the lead author of the Constitutional Amendment that dedicated 100% of all future offshore oil & gas revenues to the task of restoring and protecting Louisiana's coast. This Constitutional Amendment received a unanimous vote of the Louisiana Legislature and was approved in 2006 by 82% of the voters in a statewide election. The state of Louisiana is currently operating on a master plan for the coast which includes \$50 billion in projects designed to stabilize our coast and protect wetlands. This massive undertaking will not be possible without utilizing the the recurring source of offshore oil and gas revenue

sharing. I believe the constitutional dedication of our federal revenue sharing helped pave the way for Congress to pass GOMESA in late 2006.

In 2009, I decided to leave the State Senate to become the Executive Director of the Terrebonne Levee District. My community had been the subject of a federal study since 1992 to protect the citizens of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes through a project called Morganza to the Gulf. Although the project was authorized for construction by congress in the 2007 WRDA, it was quickly placed into re-evaluation mode by the Corps for further study and re-engineering in light of lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina. This was a very disturbing event since the citizens of Terrebonne Parish have been counting on the protection to be provided by the project and had even taxed themselves in 2001 to pay their non-federal cost share. In 2008, the leaders of Terrebonne Parish decided to start the Morganza Project using only local and state funding and, to date, my district has completed \$225 million of construction on the first phases of Morganza and the citizens of Terrebonne again voted to tax themselves in December, 2012 to continue this effort. This local effort, while substantial, will not be enough to accomplish this task. Offshore revenues, which all infrastructure as an eligible use, are the only source constant and large enough to continue work on the Morganza project – and others like it.

Finally I want to share with you my experiences growing up in Pointe-aux-Chenes, Louisiana; a small coastal community on the Terrebonne and Lafourche parish boundary line. This is a small fishing community made up of Native Americans and French Descendants which is literally at the epicenter of coastal erosion and land loss. The deterioration and slow destruction of this community has been my driving force in public service and professional life. I have witnessed in my lifetime a thriving community and culture reduced to small community currently on life support. These coastal efforts are the only hopes for this area and many others around the state of Louisiana.

It is important to note that the efforts and sacrifices of the people of coastal Louisiana have paved the way for the economic expansion of this country. The delta region of Louisiana has been sacrificed to accommodate the building of Mississippi River levees in the early 20th century. The rates of subsidence and coastal erosion were exponentially advanced and the problems that we are facing today are the result. Navigation and commerce throughout the country has been saved, the heartland has been spared flooding

of the mighty river, and the positive economic impact of this work to the country is immeasurable. But my region is gasping for survival as a result.

Today, the people of Louisiana's gift to the country is affordable domestic energy through its service of the oil and gas industry. My region is a leader in this service especially that of deep-water oil and gas production. Our ability to work on this coast is threatened by our problems but our dedication and resilience answers the call each time.

I want to leave you today with a quote from an article written in 1897 in National Geographic Magazine by a well know engineer of that time. His name was E. L. Corthell and his article was in response to a debate that was occurring in the late 19th century on what secondary effects the leveeing of the Mississippi River would have on the delta areas of Louisiana. Mr. Corthell wrote, *"While it would be generally conceded that the present generation should not be selfish, yet it is safe to say that the development of the delta country during the twentieth century by a fully protective levee system, at whatever cost to the riparian states and the Federal Government, will be so remarkable that people of the whole United States can well afford, when the time comes, to build a protective levee against the Gulf waters..."*

You see, actions taken of the Federal Government in the early 20th century is destroying my homeland before my very eyes. The question before you is, "Is it fair for Congress to pass the FAIR Act." The obvious answer is ABSOLUTELY! Passing legislation that rectifies the inequitable treatment between on and offshore states with respect to revenues generated by federal oil and gas activities is not only fair, but will allow the State of Louisiana the ability to restore and protect our vanishing coast.

I thank you once again for the opportunity to speak today. I will be happy to answer any questions.