

Gulf Oil Spill Empowers Obama to Diversify Energy Sources but “Hold Your Horses” Clean Up of Interior’s Senior Management Questioned

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Washington, DC – Applauding President Obama’s call to diversify its energy use with alternate sources, the Department of Interior-Blacks in Government Chapter [BIG] also called upon Secretary Salazar to change course and diversify management in the U.S. Department of the Interior. There are diminishing numbers of minorities in virtually all levels of senior management in the department. BIG’s leadership at Interior is questioning how effective recent changes can be if senior management continues hiring and promoting personnel drawn from the oil and energy industry instead of drawing from qualified applicants better reflecting America’s cultural and ethnic make-up.

“We support and encourage President Obama to diversify our nation’s energy resources. There are alternative sources to fossil fuels. There are also alternatives to ‘the good old boys’ network at Interior. We applaud the President’s remarks and encourage the President to consider our White Paper report on diversity at the Department of Interior to clean up equal opportunity and increase human diversity at the Department” said Kim Lambert, President of the BIG chapter at the U.S. Department of Interior. “It is unfortunate Secretary Salazar inherited a highly dysfunctional department in terms of workforce diversity, but it’s been the Secretary’s watch now for a year and a half. Our report has been on his table like a compass pointing to an entire layer of the U.S. Department of Interior out of touch with American values. We’re ready to help Secretary Salazar turn it around, but our requests contained in the report will soon be a year old and we have no engagement. There is a sad parallel to the catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico. Management at Interior approved a disaster prevention plan that failed and nobody can stop the flow. Throughout the United States, management at Interior approved a diversity plan that’s working in reverse and nobody will stop the flow out of the department. It’s as if the emergency shut off valve is working in the wrong direction” Lambert added.

The Office of Personnel Management reported to Congress that Interior was the only Executive branch of government from 2002 to 2009 that did not meet its Relevant Civilian Labor Force [RCLF] representation. Interior experienced higher Black departures than it had new hires.

The White Paper is entitled “Critical Personnel Issues Affecting Black Employees in the Department of Interior” addresses how race relations are perceived; employment practices and redress; the need for increased minority recruitment; limited promotional opportunities; low retention rates; and accountability.

The report was commissioned by BIG’s Interior Chapter in the fall of 2009 and was presented for discussion with Secretary Salazar’s representatives to an over-flow audience, and teleconference lines filled to capacity, at an Interior forum last fall.

Lambert said “if we had had more diversity of Americans in the decision process at Interior, the oil industry insiders, the ‘good old boys’, might not have had such a quick and cozy approval to remove safe guard procedures now so starkly abhorrent to all Americans.”

The report can be found on line at <http://www.doibig.clubexpress.com>.

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