

For Immediate Release

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IMMUNITY FOR BP-STYLE DISASTERS THREATENS WORKERS, ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES, SAY ADVOCATES Texas Needs New Direction on Legal Immunity

AUSTIN – Consumer, environmental, and labor advocates testified today about the importance of reversing the decades long trend of corporate immunity in Texas.

Lawmakers gathered to discuss an interim committee assignment dealing with "third party liability issues involving workers' compensation." In light of recent Texas workplace disasters and the BP oil spill, advocates told a joint hearing of the House Business & Industry and Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence committees that corporations like BP that cut corners on safety should be held fully responsible.

The groups told lawmakers to turn the page on lobby-driven proposals that are designed to immunize wrongdoers when they cause workplace catastrophes that lead to needless deaths, injuries, environmental disasters, and economic hardship for businesses and local governments.

Craig McDonald with [Texans for Public Justice](#):

"A spate of preventable workplace tragedies and the BP gulf disaster have brought us to a tipping point. It's time to slam the door on special interest groups like TLR who continually push for more limits on liability and new immunities from accountability. The best way to protect Texas and Texans is to make sure businesses and individuals are fully responsible for the harm they do. No more, but no less."

Rene Lara with [Texas AFL-CIO](#):

"What is even more stunning about the *Entergy* decision is that the Texas Supreme Court handed a blanket of legal immunity to some of the most dangerous workplaces in Texas. Even a cursory glance at the major industrial tragedies in this state demonstrates this point dramatically."

Alex Winslow with [Texas Watch](#):

"Industry groups like TLR want to socialize the havoc wreaked by a few bad actors who fail to make safety a priority. Why in the world should good companies be forced to pay for the actions of dangerous ones? Instead of protecting BP-style behavior, we should reverse the cost-benefit equation so that it costs more to cut corners on safety than it does to implement reasonable safety protocols that are proven to save lives. The best way to do this is to hold the wrongdoers who cause needless workplace deaths and injuries fully accountable in a court of law. BP and companies like it should pay a consequence for their egregious behavior."

Cyrus Reed with [Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter](#):

"If the 2005 explosion at BP's Texas City Refinery happened today, none of the injured workers or the families of the 15 workers killed could seek redress through the courts. It also means all of the court documents that have led to multiple investigations and fines related to illegal environmental emissions and safety shortcuts by BP would never have seen the light of day. It's time for the Legislature to step in

and make sure that owners of the facilities are responsible for what happens to the workers on their site and to the environment around it.”

Michael Cunningham with [Texas Building & Construction Trades Council](#):

“The Supreme Court decision in support of Entergy allowing owners of the most dangerous facilities to protect themselves and all their subcontractors from lawsuits from injured workers and limiting their liabilities from negligence of others is just wrong. Even when gambling, a person has a chance of winning, but the TLR and the activist Supreme Court Justices were able to create a double-headed coin to hand the workers working in these facilities. Now these Owners get to say ‘Just Flip It and We Call It, but your injury now limits you to Workers Compensation Benefits and You Can’t Sue Anyone.’ This egregious decision prevents injured workers and their families access to the courts in order to determine the negligence of others with the ability for further compensation.”

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