

**Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee  
Gulf Oil Spill Awareness Rally – Sunday, May 23, 2010  
Franklin County Courthouse  
Mayor Van Johnson's Remarks**

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I like to first thank the Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee for their insight into hosting this event to bring a greater awareness to such a vital issue that could have negative consequences to both our environment and economy.

Secondly, I like to thank each of you for taking time from your busy schedules, to come out and keep abreast of what's going on in your community.

History reminds us of an event that occurred some two hundred and thirty-five years ago. It was around midnight April 18, 1775. On that historic night, a messenger on horseback rode from Boston to Lexington sounding an alarm of pending danger.

The event was the famous midnight ride of Paul Revere, in which Revere raced across the countryside warning his fellow citizens that the British were coming.

Today, in the year 2010, we find ourselves in a similar situation.

Sitting at our borders, about 155-miles southwest of Apalachicola and leading the invasion is a plume of oil owned by British Petroleum (BP). A plume so large, that it's estimated to be 10 miles long, three miles wide and 300 feet thick. Once it reaches our shoreline, will almost certainly devastate the lives of every man, woman and child within this city and beyond.

There's a pending danger, a cause for concern and a need to sound the alarm.

A danger brought on by the April 20 explosion that took the lives of 11 people, and has unleashed to date, approximately 6 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

Should the leak remain unstopped; the oil will make its way to the fragile coastline of Franklin County, where it would literally leave the nursing ground of our shrimp and fish a dead zone.

This oil has the capabilities of destroying our ecosystem and economy, which is already on life support due to decades of restricted freshwater flow by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers down the Apalachicola River System.

As I stand upon these steps of the Franklin County Courthouse, which is named after one of the founders of this great nation. I find myself in a similar situation as the earlier patriot Paul Revere.

There's a need to sound the alarm and I do so for the following reasons:

I'm sounding the alarm because since the explosion, BP has demonstrated a total disregard for the environment and for the people that depend upon the health of the environment for their livelihood.

I'm sounding the alarm because it appears that BP has centered all of their efforts on saving the oil, instead of saving the ecosystem.

I'm sounding the alarm because this past Friday an executive from BP stated on the CBS Early Show that the leak could continue until early August.

I'm sounding the alarm because the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 supports the oil companies more so than it does the environment. The law passed right after the Exxon Valdez incident, caps the monetary damages for such spills at \$75 million, and it gives the federal government only oversight, instead of powers of intervention.

I'm sounding the alarm because Transocean, which owns the oil platform, filed a petition in Federal Court to limit their liability in the spill to only \$27 million dollars.

I'm sounding the alarm because our already embattled environment will not be able to withstand yet another imbalance brought on at the hand of man.

I'm sounding the alarm out of love for community, and the circumstances we find ourselves in today.

I'm sounding the alarm because we are at the mercy of BP and it's clear that they have been hiding the actual consequences of this spill.

I'm sounding the alarm here and now, because someone has to.

In addition, you can rest assured knowing, that the small City of Apalachicola will do everything within its power to hold those responsible, accountable.