

“Good Old Boys” Network at Interior Contributes to Questionable Oversight of Offshore Drilling

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Washington, DC – Citing the lack of diversity among senior managers at the Department of Interior, Blacks In Government [BIG] sees the same cozy ‘good old boys’ network as contributing to the failed oversight of the Gulf oil disaster. At Interior, there are diminishing numbers of black males at the GS-15 level and fewer minorities in virtually all levels of senior management. BIG’s leadership at Interior is raising questions about this type of senior management environment all too insular to people ‘not like them.’ This cozy network, of having Federal regulators oversee safety compliance and revenue as contributing factors to the current Gulf oil disaster, is the same cozy network of attitudes BIG has identified in its recent White Paper on race relations at Interior.

“We applaud Secretary Salazar’s initiative to break up oversight duties of the agencies responsible for the Gulf oil disaster still unfolding. The failure at the highest levels of Interior to hold managers accountable to achieving increased diversity in recruitment and promotion stem from the same failures of senior managers like these. We heartily encourage Secretary Salazar to hold these departments accountable and shake up the ‘good old boys and good old girls’ network of relationships when the nation’s best interests are at risk” said Kim Lambert, President of the BIG chapter at the U.S. Department of Interior. “In this regard, Secretary Salazar inherited a highly dysfunctional department. We’re ready to help him turn it around, but this disaster and the diversity disaster were years in the making. Secretary Salazar, help us, help you” Lambert went on to add.

The Office of Personnel Management reported to Congress that Interior was the only agency from 2002 to 2009 that did not meet its Relevant Civilian Labor Force [RCLF] representation. Of all independent federal agencies, Interior experienced higher Black departures than it had new hires.

As one excerpt from the White Paper notes, “often when a Black candidate makes the best-qualified certification list for an advertised vacancy...and who may be the best qualified and outstanding in the interview process, may still fail to get selected.”

The White Paper is entitled “Critical Personnel Issues Affecting Black Employees in the Department of Interior.” The White Paper addresses How Race Relations are Perceived; Employment Practices and Redress; the Need for Increased Minority Recruitment; Limited Promotional Opportunities; Low Retention Rates; and Accountability. It was commissioned by BIG’s Interior Chapter in the fall of 2009 and 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 went on to comment “to date no measureable progress has been made to increase diversity, hold managers accountable or even meet with the Secretary and those responsible to devise a collaborative strategy.”

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

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WHERE :

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