

THE ALASKA FORUM

The Newsletter of the Alaska Forum for Environmental Responsibility

Spring 2000

Disaster Averted on Stranded Gas Pipeline Bill

Obscure Language In House Bill 290 Would Have Stripped State's Oversight of Proposed LNG Marine Terminal

During the recently adjourned session of the Alaska State Legislature, one particular bill caught the attention of the Alaska Forum. House Bill 290, introduced by the Resources Committee, is titled, "Stranded Gas Pipeline Carriers." The bill ostensibly performs a bit of "house-cleaning" with regard to how the state regulates pipelines – specifically with regard to a natural gas pipeline, should one ever be built. But our research of the bill uncovered a slyly worded provision that would have accomplished much more than simple house-cleaning.

The bill was written by the ANS Sponsor Group, the consortium of oil companies who have banded together to explore methods of bringing North Slope

gas to market. This group was largely headed by the now-defunct Arco Alaska, Inc., with other participants including Phillips, Foothills, Marubeni, and most recently, BP Amoco. HB 290 is a bill without which, says the ANS



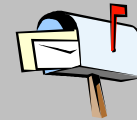
Alaska State Legislature Update

Sponsor Group, a gas export project is impossible.

The bill is largely non-environmental in nature, but one paragraph stood out as having potentially serious environmental consequences. Section 7, Paragraph 16 explicitly defines for the purposes of the bill the term "Stranded Gas Pipeline." It reads, in part: "all the facilities of a total system of pipe...for transportation of stranded gas" and so on. But then the term is further defined as "excluding marine terminal facilities."

This seemingly innocuous language actually amends the so-called Pipeline Act (AS 42.06) which grants the state the authority to provide regulatory oversight of marine terminals. To put it another way, HB 290 would have negated the ability of such agencies as the Department of Environmental Conservation to oversee

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The following is an excerpt from a 2/21/00 Alaska Forum letter to the House Resources Committee:

"One could argue that this minor language in only one House Bill could not possibly grant [a regulatory exemption for the marine terminal], but it appears nevertheless to set a dangerous precedent as to what the state may regulate and what it may not. You might call it the proverbial first step down that slippery slope."

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The Alaska Forum is the newsletter of the Alaska Forum for Environmental Responsibility, a nonprofit advocacy and education organization.

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Our mission:

The Alaska Forum is dedicated to holding industry and government accountable to the laws designed to safeguard the environment, provide a safe and retaliation-free workplace, and achieve a sustainable economy in Alaska.

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A Message from the Executive Director by Ross Coen

Since the publication of our last newsletter (January 2000), I've had a number of people come to me and ask what makes the Alaska Forum different from the many other environmental groups in the state. One gentleman said that he would join us as a member – but only if I could make a compelling case for what makes my organization unique and not simply duplicative of the other Alaska environmental groups. My answer was apparently sufficient – as I received a check from him the following week – and so I will now give you the same answer to that gentleman's query.

While other environmental groups are focused primarily on protecting wilderness and previously undeveloped lands (certainly a worthy pursuit in its own right), the Alaska Forum is instead focused on **guaranteeing that the development that has already occurred operates in the most environmentally-responsible manner possible.**

For example, from time to time the Alaska Forum is asked for its input on the issue of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil development. Our take on this issue is that until the oil companies live up to their promises and operate the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (TAPS) and the other oil fields responsibly, then we are not going to even consider the issue of new fields.

Look at it this way: The current projections for the operating life of TAPS are ever-increasing, as new technologies increase the amount of recoverable oil from existing fields. Even if no new oil fields are brought online – *none* – we will still have an 800-mile pipeline and the existing infrastructure to monitor for decades. The Alaska Forum is the only environmental group in the state whose primary focus is oversight of these facilities.

And with no false modesty I would claim that our oversight of TAPS is needed now more than ever. If you were to plot risk assessment of pipelines on a graph, it would be shaped like a bathtub: risks are high as a pipeline is first brought online, the risks fall rapidly as the “bugs” are worked out of the system, the graph then levels out as routine operation sets in, and then the risks begin to rapidly rise once again as the pipeline ages and requires extensive maintenance. As TAPS continues to age, we are approaching that point where the risks begin to rise. And that is exactly why the Alaska Forum is a necessary member of the Alaska environmental community.

Witch Hunt In Washington

by Ross Coen

Opinion

Last week, a subcommittee of Chairman Don Young's House Resources Committee began to hold hearings on the activities of a watchdog group, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO). Those activities included a lawsuit filed by POGO against Mobil which alleged that the oil company was shortchanging the government on royalty payments for oil leases on federal land. POGO filed the lawsuit under the False Claims Act, which allows a group or individual to sue a private company they believe is defrauding the government; the Act also grants them a percentage of any fine levied as a result.

Representative Young took umbrage with the fact that POGO, upon being awarded a \$1.1 million settlement in the case, paid two whistleblowers \$380,000 each for their decade-long work in bringing Mobil's abuses to light. Never mind that Mobil settled the case for \$45 million, all but admitting that they indeed had been stealing from the federal government for years (the lawsuit revealed that the oil industry as a whole underpaid royalties by over \$300 million). That apparently didn't phase Rep. Young in the slightest. By the way, it should be mentioned that the two whistleblowers are federal employees, one of whom works for the Interior Department – certainly not Rep. Young's favorite agency – and the other is retired from the Energy Department.

It is highly unfortunate that Rep. Young – as well as the media – have paid attention solely to the issue of the payments made to the whistleblowers. Virtually ignored in this entire affair is the fact that the two whistleblowers saved the American people hundreds of millions of dollars and that now they are being retaliated against in the most draconian manner by Rep. Young. Unfortunately, this conforms to the pattern that so

many whistleblowers have seen before – instead of having their allegations investigated, they find *themselves* the target of investigations and in most cases outright harassment and intimidation.

Back in February, Rep. Young issued subpoenas to POGO asking for, among other things, copies of the Executive Director's home telephone records. It is remarkably odd that Alaska's congressman, who prides himself on his patriotism and strict adherence to the Bill of Rights, would so invade the privacy of a U.S. citizen. Would that the Department of the Interior issued a subpoena asking for Don Young's home telephone records! The resulting outcry from the "congressman for all Alaska" would resound from Washington, DC to Fort Yukon and back again. Twice.

Last year, another incident in the Southwest raised the hackles of Rep. Young – as well as free speech advocates everywhere. Rep. Young, angered by the actions of the U.S. Forest Service, subpoenaed employees of that agency forcing them to identify the environmental groups they belonged to. He stated at the time that he feared the U.S. Forest Service was becoming "a captive agency." Presumably what he meant was that the agency was in the wrong for employing individuals with whom he didn't ideologically agree. Had every employee been a card-carrying member of the NRA, that no doubt would have passed muster with Rep. Young.

The recent actions of the House Resources Committee bring to mind an incident in the early

"POGO uncovered and disclosed [the oil industry's underpayments]; yet in Washington today it seems, no good deed goes unpunished."

David Hunter, Chair of POGO's Board of Directors

1990's that many Alaskans are sure to remember. Following the *Exxon Valdez* spill, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company enlisted their primary security firm, the Wackenhut Corporation, to investigate a number of environmental activists

hoping to ferret out a whistleblower. Wackenhut proceeded to place taps on telephone lines, illegally purchase bootleg copies of phone records, sift through trash bins, and even set up a phony environmental law firm hoping to gain the trust of key individuals.

When these actions were exposed, a

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(HB 290, continued from page 1)

the operation of the gas pipeline's marine terminal, whether in Valdez or Nikiski. It is essentially *carte blanche* for the ANS Sponsor Group to operate their marine terminal without any pesky interference from the state (who might push for such burdensome regulation as maintaining air quality standards).

When questioned on this point in the House Oil & Gas Committee, the representative from the ANS Sponsor Group, Michael Hurley, first claimed that the marine terminal exemption was an effort to reduce the transportation costs of the gas, thereby increasing the royalties the state would receive. Skeptics (such as the Alaska Forum) wondered why the oil industry was suddenly so deeply concerned with the state's share of gas revenue. Hurley's statement amounted to an admission that the oil industry would willingly fill the state's coffers at their own expense – a ludicrous proposition.

Later, Hurley claimed that the state (via the Joint Pipeline Office) has always maintained regulatory authority over only pipelines, not other facilities, and so he wondered why that should change now. Once again, Hurley was being either intentionally disingenuous or woefully misinformed. Since the construction of the Valdez Marine Terminal in the 1970's, the state has maintained a continuous regulatory presence.

An amendment in the House Oil & Gas Committee that would have eliminated the marine terminal exemption (restored regulatory authority) failed on a 5-4 vote. The Alaska Forum learned that an intense lobbying effort by the ANS Sponsor Group the previous evening scuttled that amendment. One legislator who voted against the amendment commented that there is already too much regulation and that government should be getting smaller, not larger. It seems that this legislator has more of an ideological ax to grind, as opposed to concerns about the gas pipeline itself.

All was not lost, however, as a similar amendment passed in the following committee, Resources. During debate in that committee, Hurley offered yet a third explanation for the marine terminal exemption (probably hoping that sooner or later one of his explanations would hold water). He stated that the exemption was meant to

exclude the marine terminal from being a common carrier. Essentially, the pipeline itself is a common carrier, as anyone along the line can purchase gas (i.e. a public utility); but the gas that reaches the terminal is dedicated solely for export and thus must be exempt from common carrier status.

While this explanation is the most correct of the three offered by Hurley, the state was quick to point out that HB 290 could easily grant that common carrier exemption *without* canceling the regulatory authority of the Joint Pipeline Office. There's no reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater, as they say. The Resources Committee agreed and the state's authority to regulate marine terminals, as well as pipelines and all other facilities, was restored. The final version of HB 290 passed both the House and Senate with near unanimous support.

The Alaska Forum would like to thank some dedicated individuals who positively affected HB 290 and averted a potential environmental boondoggle: Bill Britt (JPO), Mike Barnhill (Attorney General's Office), Roger Marks (Department of Revenue), and lastly the House Resources Committee. ❖



National Pipeline Reform Conference

Washington, DC
April 9-11, 2000

(Editor's Note: The following are the full remarks of Billie P. Garde at the National Pipeline Reform Conference held April 9-11 in Washington, DC. Ms. Garde is one of the leading whistleblower attorneys in the nation. She assists the Alaska Forum, pro bono, in its advocacy work on behalf of pipeline workers and to improve the quality control programs on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.)

In 1989, a United States Department of Labor judge issued a decision in a "Whistleblower" case under the regulations that govern the nuclear industry. The Judge said: "Recent events here and around the world underscore the reality that technology is never safe without constant human vigilance. The employee protection provision involved in *[Rose v. Secretary of Dept. of Labor]* thus serves the dual function of protecting both employees and the public from dangerous radioactive substances" 800 F.2d 563, 565 (6th Cir. 1986).

Recent events in the pipeline industry demonstrate the same principle. The operation of pipelines involves dangerous technology. In this country, and around the world, pipeline accidents have killed innocent people, maimed pipeline workers, destroyed facilities, caused catastrophic harm to the environment, interrupted commerce, and interfered with life.

The root cause of these accidents all unravels back to some combination of circumstances that include inadequate human vigilance to the technology, the condition of the pipeline itself, improper or inadequate testing and maintenance procedures, and the failure of those who are responsible to ensure pipeline safety to predict failure. Of course, no one planned these terrible accidents - but no one prevented them either.

Beginning in 1972, Congress recognized the critical role played by employees in any industry that affects public health and safety. Beginning with the Clean Water Act, as well as the Surface Mining Act, the federal Mine Safety Act, the Surface

Transportation Act, and OSHA, Congress began inserting employee protection provisions that made the act of retaliating against employees a violation of the laws and regulations that govern any industry engaged in activities covered by these laws, in every piece of environmental legislation. The statutes, while short and uncomplicated, provide broad protections to employees.

The laws have been exercised by employees across the industries they were designed to protect. While it is impossible to assess whether accidents have been avoided as a result of the protections themselves, I can tell you with absolute certainty that the very existence of the laws has changed the nature of the relationship between a company and its employees. The industry in which the laws have been used the most, the nuclear industry, is a dramatically different place than it was thirty years ago when Karen Silkwood fled for her life with documents about the Kerr-McGee facility. Today, employees in the nuclear industry know their rights to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. Those rights are posted at all facilities. The employees understand their right to raise concerns to anyone, not simply up the chain of command, but to any avenue that they believe will result in protecting the public. Management also understands these rights, and has had to adjust the way they make decisions, do business, implement changes, in order to ensure that the differing views, opinions and concerns of its employees are taken into account. The regulator has imposed on the industry a requirement to ensure, not simply that employees are not retaliated against, but that the industry is able to demonstrate that its employees are willing to raise concerns and will do so.

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www.alaska.net/~afervdz

(The web page will be updated shortly!)

To reach us by email: afervdz@alaska.net

BP-Arco Merger Update!

In our last newsletter, we took Governor Tony Knowles to task for the complete breakdown of public policy in the BP-Arco merger. Much has changed since that editorial ran – happily for the better.

In February, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed an anti-trust lawsuit to block the merger. This brought BP to the negotiating table in a meaningful way and resulted in the *complete* divestiture of Arco's Alaska assets (not the mere crumbs that Governor Knowles was able to obtain).

Phillips Petroleum won the bidding for Arco Alaska, Inc. and is in the process of taking over operations as we go to press. Additionally, the merger negotiations resulted in the unitization of Prudhoe Bay under one operator, BP. It remains to be seen just what effect this radical restructuring of Alaska's oil industry will have on the state's environment and economic prosperity. But one thing is certain – we are much better off now than we were under the Knowles agreement.

The Governor, ever one to save face and politically spin every issue to his liking, claimed that the FTC agreement “is not a better deal [than the Governor's], it's a different deal.” Knowles can dress up this issue any way he chooses, but the Alaska Forum remains convinced that the FTC agreement is a better deal and that history will show how the FTC saved Alaska while Governor Knowles tried to bargain it away.

(POGO, continued from page 3)

Congressional inquiry was held with hearings before the House Resources Committee (of which Rep. Young was then the senior minority member). The Committee rigorously denounced the actions of both the security firm and Alyeska. Rep. Young agreed, though some would say with little

enthusiasm, that whistleblowers who risk their careers and in some cases their personal safety should not suffer retaliation, harassment, or intimidation; but should instead have their allegations properly investigated. One must wonder if Rep. Young has forgotten those events of only a few years ago, now that his actions so closely resemble the very whistleblower retaliation he admonished.

Further inquiry into the POGO matter reveals that indeed Rep. Young's allegations are baseless. He condemns the payments to the whistleblowers, yet ignores that POGO sought professional legal and accounting advice on how to report the payments to the IRS. He also ignores the fact that POGO informed the Justice Department of their intention to make the payments before they did so.

Whistleblowers are a unique and integral part of exposing fraud, deceit, and malfeasance in both industry and government. Very often, they are risking ostracism from their colleagues, unjust firings or transfers, and other forms of reprisal. They deserve our support in their efforts to make workplaces safer, the environment cleaner, and both industry and government less riddled with graft and corruption. It seems that our congressman needs once again to be reminded of that. ❖



The following is an excerpt from a 2/28/00 Alaska Forum letter to Rep. Don Young regarding the POGO subpoenas:

“The Alaska Forum has spent the better part of a decade offering support for concerned employees and thus we understand the vital role that whistleblowers play in both government and private industry. The Project On Government Oversight also understands this role and indeed the efforts of both that organization and the courageous whistleblowers have helped to eliminate fraud and deceit within government. By issuing these subpoenas, your Committee is undermining the faith that whistleblowers' identities will be protected.”

Survival Tips For Whistleblowers



Recognizing Retaliation:

The Risks and Costs of Being a Whistleblower

(Excerpted from the *Alaska Whistleblower Resource Guide*)

If you plan to challenge the agency or corporation that employs you, you should know the tactics of retaliation most often used against whistleblowers.

Spotlight the Whistleblowers

This common retaliatory strategy seeks to make the whistleblower, instead of his or her message, the issue: employers will try to create smokescreens by attacking the source's motives, credibility, professional competence, or virtually anything else that will work to cloud the issues s/he has raised.

Manufacture a Poor Record

Employers occasionally spend months or years building a record to brand a whistleblower as a chronic problem employee. Employers may begin to compile memoranda about any incident, real or contrived, that conveys inadequate or problematic performance; whistleblowers who formerly received sterling performance evaluations may begin to receive poor ratings from supervisors.

Threaten them into silence

This tactic is commonly reflected in statements such as, "You'll never work again in this town/industry/agency..." Threats can also be indirect: employers may issue gag orders forbidding the whistleblower from speaking out under threat of termination.

Isolate or Humiliate Them

Another retaliation technique is to make an example of the whistleblower by separating him or her from colleagues. This may remove him or her from access to information necessary to effectively blow

the whistle. Employers also may exercise the bureaucratic equivalent of placing a whistleblower in the public stocks: a top manager may be reassigned to tasks such as sweeping the floors or counting the rolls of toilet paper in the bathroom.

Set Them Up For Failure

Perhaps as common as isolating or humiliating whistleblowers by stripping them of their duties is the converse – overloading them with unmanageable work. This involves assigning a whistleblower responsibilities and then making it impossible to fulfill them. One approach is to withdraw research privileges, data access, or subordinate staff necessary for a whistleblower to perform the job. Another is to put the whistleblower on a pedestal of cards – to appoint him or her to solve the problem s/he has exposed, and then refuse to provide the resources or authority to follow through.

Prosecute Them

The longstanding threat to attack whistleblowers for "stealing" the evidence used to expose misconduct is becoming more serious, particularly for private property that is evidence of illegality. Government workers have even been threatened with prosecution under a McCarthy-era statute for being "disloyal" to the United States, after they made disclosures to environmental groups involved in lawsuits challenging illegal government activity.

Eliminate Their Job or Stall Their Career

A common tactic is to lay off whistleblowers even as the company or agency is hiring new staff. Employers may "reorganize" whistleblowers out of jobs or into marginal positions. Another technique is to deep-freeze the careers of whistleblowers who manage to resist firing. Bad references for future job prospects are common.

Complete copies of the *Alaska Whistleblower Resource Guide* are available, at no charge, from the Alaska Forum. Call, write, or email us (see page 11). The guide can also be viewed and/or downloaded from our web site: www.alaska.net/~afervdz

U.S. Supreme Court Overturns Washington State Tanker Laws

In early March, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states cannot set their own oil tanker safety standards, but must adhere solely to the existing federal regulations. The decision in the so-called Intertanko case does allow states to impose regulation when addressing unique local waterways. The ruling, which was celebrated by the shipping industry, may have impacts on the safety of tanker traffic in Alaska.

The case reached the Supreme Court when the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (Intertanko) alleged that laws passed by Washington state superseded the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA90) and thus were unconstitutional. One such law required that tankers have on-board at least two English-speaking crew members to communicate with local authorities. Federal law only requires one. The court agreed that federal law, under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard, takes precedence.

The impact of this ruling to Alaska's waters is still largely unknown. Stan Jones, with the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, commented, "We don't expect a devastating impact, but we are disappointed." An agreement that Alaska oil companies would report tanker incidents that occur outside state waters is one example of a regulation that may suffer under the Intertanko ruling.

The Prince William Sound RCAC, with full support of the Alaska Forum, filed an *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") brief in support of Washington state and their ability to impose tanker safety regulation.

In response to the ruling, Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) recently introduced a bill in Congress, the States Prevention of Oil Tanker Spills Act, which will allow all states to implement "the best achievable protection" against oil spills. The bill essentially reinstates the authority the Intertanko decision took away.

The litigation by Intertanko is by no means the first example of the oil transportation industry attempting to subvert local regulation, even in

Alaska. In 1976, the Alaska State Legislature enacted the Tank Vessel Regulation Act, which authorized the state to adopt traffic regulations in accordance with federal standards; and the Oil Discharge Prevention and Pollution Control Act, which prohibited the discharge of oil in state waters. The latter act also required terminal operators and vessel owners to pay annual risk charges that would be dedicated to clean-up, research, oversight, and administration.

But just two years later, the oil industry sued (Chevron v. Hammond) and got the dedicated funds provision thrown out. Then, in 1979, a federal court ruled in favor of the oil industry and repealed both the Tank Vessel Regulation Act and Oil Discharge Prevention and Pollution Control Act in their

entirety. The court's rationale in that decision was remarkably similar to that in the Intertanko case; namely, that state laws cannot be more progressive than federal laws.

Immediately following this ruling, BP converted their three newly constructed double-hulled tankers by modifying the side walls – essentially trading that defensive space for more cargo area.

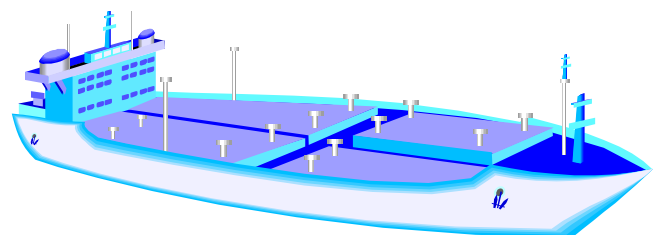
The revocation of these laws, combined with the ruling that prohibited the state from recouping oversight fees, signaled the end of the daily inspections of tankers – indeed the virtual elimination of any oversight whatsoever for over a decade.

In the years immediately preceding the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the Valdez Marine Terminal, the oil industry was quick to promise the world when it came to tanker safety and environmental protection. Alyeska's pollution control specialist, R. L. Beynon, stated in 1971: "The best equipment, materials and expertise will

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"We don't expect a devastating impact, but we are disappointed."

Stan Jones,
PWSRCAC



(Intertanko, continued from previous page)

make operations at Port Valdez and in Prince William Sound the safest in the world.”

Alyeska President E. L. Patton was much more effusive when he commented on the risk of oil spills at the Valdez Marine Terminal in 1973: “We are aiming for zero spillage, and we have every reason to believe our efforts will be successful.”

While the largely rhetorical statements of Beynon and Patton may be dismissed as simple overconfidence, other industry promises included specific details that were subsequently reneged upon. In 1973, Alyeska issued a brochure claiming that all Valdez tanker traffic would be “U.S. flag tankers.” The brochure also included a chart showing that no tankers larger than 150,000 deadweight tons would be used. Four years later, Alyeska instructed its Fairbanks office to “get rid of” all copies that brochure, as both promises were already scheduled to be broken.

These examples of broken promises help to illustrate one very cogent point – that industry cannot be relied upon to self-regulate. Additionally, the failure of the federal government to provide adequate oversight (i.e. the Carter Administration advocated double-hulled tankers in 1977, but, following intense industry lobbying against the

provision, it was never followed up) shows that local control is the best prevention for accidents and oil spills. Unfortunately, the Intertanko ruling flies in the face of this wisdom.

Regarding the recent Supreme Court decision, the chairman of Intertanko, Westye Hoegh, presumably without irony, stated in a press release: “This is a major statement from the United States that it will continue to play a leadership role in vessel safety and marine environmental protection.” The Alaska Forum, for one, is disappointed that Intertanko sees fit to celebrate what may very well be a downturn for vessel safety and marine environmental protection. ❖

(Billie Garde, continued from page 5)

I would be remiss if I told you that these federal employee protection laws work perfectly - they do not. The administrative process takes too long and the remedies are too weak. As a plaintiffs lawyer, would much rather try a case to a jury with the potential of punitive damages. Some states, including the State of Washington, don't have punitive damages. But these laws are much better than nothing. ❖



Photo by Tonya Trabant



Alaska State Legislature Update

Cheers & Jeers

The Alaska Forum is pleased to present an end-of-session recap of the bills that were of particular interest to us – complete with our editorial comments (of course).



Senate Joint Resolution 18: “Pay Up Exxon”

This resolution simply urged Exxon to pay the damages (finally!) awarded to Alaskans resulting from the *Exxon Valdez* spill. The resolution passed both the House and Senate, but amazingly, 11 legislators saw fit to vote against it. One legislator, Joe Green, even commented that this was business best left to the courts – this from a member of the same Republican party that has sought to restrict the power of the judiciary while enhancing that of the legislature. Special JEERS go out to the “No” votes: Lyda Green (R-Wasilla), Rick Halford (R-Chugiak), Sean Parnell (R-Anchorage), Drue Pearce (R-Anchorage), John Coghill (R-North Pole), John Cowdery (R-Anchorage), Richard Foster (D-Nome), Joe Green (R-Anchorage), Vic Kohring (R-Wasilla), Gail Phillips (R-Homer), Brian Porter (R-Anchorage).



House Joint Resolution 33: “Prohibit Kyoto Treaty”

This resolution, which passed the House only, encourages the U.S. Congress to refuse to ratify the Kyoto Treaty, which provides for dealing with the issue of global warming. Essentially, the resolution states the following: “Climate change be damned! Let’s pump more oil!” It also reaffirms the misguided belief Senator Pete Kelly (R-Fairbanks) has been saying for years – that global warming is nothing but a “myth” perpetuated by environmental groups to “increase their funding.” Shame on the legislature for this one.



Senate Bill 273: “Cruise Ship/Railroad Spill Bill”

This bill would have strengthened spill prevention and response to include non-tanker vessels as well as the Alaska Railroad. It also would have required those industries to file spill contingency plans, much like Alyeska for example. The bill earned high praise from the Alaska Forum – that is until it ran into Representative Ramona Barnes (R-Anchorage) who watered down the contingency plan requirement (some would say at the bequest of big-money lobbyists and influence peddlers). Nevertheless, the bill is more protection than Alaska’s environment had a year ago and so it gets a thumbs-up from us.



House Bill 247: “Rewrite of Non-Profit Code”

We give a big thumbs-down to Representative Pete Kott (R-Eagle River) for introducing this bill. HB 247, which thankfully went nowhere, would have rewritten the state’s non-profit code to impose burdensome accounting requirements and affect the receipt and use of grant funding for organizations such as the Alaska Forum. Essentially it stems from the Republican majority’s intense dislike of any and all non-profit groups who work for positive societal change. Go figure.

We'd like to hear from you!



As a member of the Alaska Forum, you have a say in how the organization operates, which issues we work on (or don't), and every other aspect of our activities on behalf of Alaska's people and environment. We'd love to hear your feedback, so please feel free to call, write, or email about anything that interests you and we promise to address your concerns.

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The Alaska Forum would like to thank the following foundations for their generous support, that helped to make this newsletter and all of our efforts possible:

- Alaska Conservation Foundation
- The Brainerd Foundation
- Environmental Support Center

Additionally, while we do not make our membership list public, we would like to thank all of you who have generously supported our work.

Thank you!

The Alaska Forum

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The Alaska Forum needs your help. Your membership dues directly support our work to protect the rights of conscientious employees to speak the truth about threats to worker safety and the environment in Alaska. Please join by filling out the membership form below and returning it to us. The Alaska Forum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Donations in excess of benefits are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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