ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465- 3873 - Phone
(907) 465-3922 - Fax
Senator_Bert_Stedman@legis.state.ak.us

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone - (907) 465- 4453
Fax - (907) 465- 4523
Senator_Lyman_Hoffman@legis.state.ak.us

Official Business

SPONSOR STATEMENT
CSSB 305(FIN) (title am)

SB 305 separates oil and natural gas for purposes of calculating the progressivity portion of the production tax under AS 43.55. Under this bill the progressivity surcharges for oil and Cook Inlet and in-state gas would be calculated together, but distinctly from export gas, instead of the current practice on all oil and gas combined. The progressivity structure itself would be unchanged, based on 0.4% of the production value that exceeds $30 per barrel for oil, and $30 per BTU barrel of oil equivalent for gas. The base tax rate is unchanged at 25% of production tax value.

Under current law the tax rate is based on the combined BTU value of oil and gas. However, oil and gas can have vastly different values on a BTU basis. Currently a BTU of oil is worth much more than a BTU of gas. Accordingly, once a major gas sale starts, overlaying the existing oil production, the BTU value of the combined oil and gas would be much lower than it was for oil alone. This has been referred to as the dilution effect and could cause a significant reduction in oil taxes as a result of a major gas sale. The existing tax structure, in conjunction with the inherent uncertainty of future oil and gas prices, exposes the state to significant financial risk were a major gas sale to occur. The structure also creates economic instability for entities looking to participate in the development and financing of a natural gas pipeline project in Alaska. SB 305 removes the dilution effect by having progressivity calculated distinctly for oil and gas. This will result in no reduction in oil taxes from a major gas sale.

As in current law, the bill gives the Department of Revenue the authority to adopt regulations to allocate costs between oil and gas, with the added instruction that a method based on relative BTU barrel of oil equivalents should be considered. That method was the one adopted by the department under the same authority for implementation of the current law.

Some producers currently produce Cook Inlet gas or other in-state gas along with North Slope oil. If all gas were separated from oil these producers would see an immediate tax increase. The bill is not intended to increase taxes on current activity. Having the progressivity for Cook Inlet gas and other in-state gas calculated together replicates the current situation, so these producers will see no tax increases. Only progressivity on export gas, like the gas from a major gas sale, would be calculated distinctly. This will prevent a major gas sale from diluting progressivity on oil.

Under the tax inducement provisions of the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act (AGIA), the tax structure in place at the time of the first binding open season (May 1, 2010), may be locked in for the first ten years of gas commercialization. Consequently, to the extent there is interest in decoupling our tax structure, it needs to be done before April 30, 2010.