

Legislators Tell Murkowski Their Concerns

By Dave Donaldson, APRN - Juneau | February 23, 2012 - 5:35 pm

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Near the end of her presentation, Senator Murkowski asked legislators to communicate with the federal government and with her office about any concerns they might have.

She was quickly asked about two messages to the federal government that are pending action in the legislature this session.

A resolution by Anchorage Republican Charisse Millett asks the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management to clean up 137 abandoned oil wells drilled by the federal government within the National Petroleum Reserve. The wells were part of government-sponsored NPR-A exploration between 1942 and 1982 and have never been plugged or subject to remediation. Leaving them as they are is a violation of state and federal law. Murkowski said that is “Offensive.”

You want an action plan, let’s raise hell. This is just wrong. It’s just wrong and they can’t handle the fact that they have turned their head to the responsibility. And yet, they won’t let you walk anywhere up there without sixteen permits – and yet they have failed in their environmental stewardship in a way that is so egregious.

She told Millett that seven of the wells have been cleaned. The next thirty seven wells on the federal list would cost only \$50-million to close – but the Interior Department refuses to work on more than one per year.

Another resolution pending in the House is by Anchorage Democrat Les Gara that calls for a Constitutional Amendment to prevent corporations or unions from being able to make unlimited, secret contributions to political campaigns. That was the result of the U-S Supreme Court’s now-famous Citizens United decision that allows private money into the process without having the source of that money identified.

Murkowski said the decision has led to a phenomenal impact on this year’s elections and is counter to the idea of transparent government.

For lots of different reasons, people don’t like to disclose. For lots of good reasons, we need to disclose. So here’s where I am on Citizens United. If we can figure out a way that legislatively that we can require greater disclosure and we need to do it soon.

Murkowski pointed out that she was the beneficiary of a SuperPAC’s support in the 2010 election. However, she said the principle supporters or all such groups should be made

public – however, she doesn't expect any federal action until after this year's campaigns are over.

Millett's resolution on what's called the Legacy Wells is in the Rules Committee and could be on the House floor at any time. Gara's resolution on Citizens United is in the House Judiciary Committee.