

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 3, 2023

1:16 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Tom McKay, Chair  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Stanley Wright  
Representative Jennie Armstrong  
Representative Donna Mears  
Representative Maxine Dibert

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative George Rauscher, Vice Chair  
Representative Josiah Patkotak  
Representative Kevin McCabe

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S): THE MORAL CASE FOR FOSSIL FUELS

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ALEX EPSTEIN, Founder/President  
Center for Industrial Progress  
San Diego, California

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the Moral Case for Fossil Fuels Presentation.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:16:35 PM](#)

**CHAIR TOM MCKAY** called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:16 p.m. Representatives Mears, Dibert, [Saddler], and McKay were present at the call to order. Representatives Armstrong and Wright arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION(S) : THE MORAL CASE FOR FOSSIL FUELS**

[1:17:07 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY announced that the only order of business would be the Moral Case for Fossil Fuels presentation.

[1:18:13 PM](#)

ALEX EPSTEIN, Founder/President, Center for Industrial Progress, began by giving his background in both philosophy and the fossil fuel industry and sharing his opinions regarding the world's future need for fossil fuels. He commenced the Moral Case for Fossil Fuels presentation via PowerPoint [hardcopy included in the committee packet], on slide 4, which gave a comparison between fossil fuels and medicine. He continued to slide 5, which attempted to validate the need for fossil fuels through this medicine comparison. He moved to slide 6, to share "three irrefutable principles" to his own understanding of the scientifically proven fact of climate change that fossil fuel use must be mitigated and eventually eliminated.

[1:28:27 PM](#)

MR. EPSTEIN presented "ten undeniable facts of fossil fuels," shown on slides 7-22: 1) cost-effective energy is essential to human flourishing; 2) billions of people currently lack cost-effective energy sources; 3) fossil fuels are a uniquely cost-effective source of energy; 4) unreliable solar and wind electricity are failing to replace fossil fuel energy; 5) fossil fuels give humans an enormous ability to master climate danger, whether natural or manmade; 6) human's carbon dioxide emissions over the last 170 years of fossil fuel use have correlated with about 1 degree Celsius of global warming; 7) there are still far more cold-related deaths than heat-related deaths; 8) warming is occurring more often in colder regions of the planet during its cold season; 9) the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide is a diminishing logarithmic effect that will eventually slow in its pace; and 10) the projected worsening weather and increase in sea level are currently "masterable" by an "empowered world."

[1:41:44 PM](#)

MR. EPSTEIN skipped to slide 24, which outlined a set of conclusions that could be drawn from the presentation, and to slide 26, which shared his belief that current political

leadership is making irrational decisions in regard to fossil fuel policy. Showing slide 27, he talked about a need for "better energy education" for the public. Slides 28-29 provided sources Mr. Epstein used in creating the presentation.

[1:45:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked if there is a defined tolerance of how far the sea level could rise.

MR. EPSTEIN responded that the negative effects of sea level rise would be dependent on the state's ability to mitigate them.

[1:47:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked if Mr. Epstein had considered the effects that climate change has on Alaska when he wrote his book Fossil Future.

MR. EPSTEIN answered that he has had discussions with Governor Mike Dunleavy about fossil fuel policy at the federal level.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG challenged Mr. Epstein's idea that producing fossil fuels is necessary for humans to flourish by pointing out that Alaska, which is one of the top fossil fuel producing states, ranks last in many humanitarian statistics, along with many other top fossil fuel producing countries in the world. She further challenged Mr. Epstein's idea that fossil fuel is necessary to create cost-effective energy by again pointing out that Alaska is one of the top fossil fuel producing states but has one of the highest costs of energy in the country. She pointed out that the state already subsidizes nearly \$40 million a year for diesel fuel in rural communities across the state, but certain areas of Alaska, like Juneau, have some of the cheapest energy in the country due in full to its hydroelectric energy source.

MR. EPSTEIN, in response to Representative Armstrong, said that hydroelectric electricity is limited in where it can be applied because of topographic restrictions. He said that the reason that Saudi Arabia and Venezuela are lower in humanitarian statistics is because of their culture and emphasized that his perspective is not that of an oil producer but one of someone who wants the most cost-effective energy option for all consumers.

REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG said that she wants pro-responsible resource development and pro-renewable and pro-nuclear energy.

[1:52:26 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY opined that the quality of life in Alaska was lower before it became a state.

[1:52:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT spoke to her experience living in rural Alaska and shared how the climate there is being affected by climate change. She said that rivers are no longer freezing which is making them harder and unsafe to navigate and further shared that her family hasn't been able to harvest salmon on the Yukon River for the last five years. She asked Mr. Epstein how his studies are connected with rural villages in Alaska.

MR. EPSTEIN asked Representative Dibert what she thinks should be done to solve the problems she mentioned and asked if "China and India shouldn't industrialize so that people could live the exact same lifestyle in rural Alaska."

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT responded by asking Mr. Epstein whether he had worked with rural villages when creating his studies.

MR. EPSTEIN replied, "The people I talk to from those villages are skewed; more reach out to me because they agree with me than disagree with me." He said that he is a "believer in progress, human capability and adaptation" and argued that "the more primitive a lifestyle is, the more it will be threatened by progress."

[1:57:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER opined that the presentation is factual and said that he is suspicious of the science that proves the need to leave fossil fuels in the past. He said he was concerned that people want to benefit from fossil fuels but not accept their downsides .

[1:59:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MEARS shared her agreeance that access to energy has a lot of benefits and said that it doesn't make sense to avoid green energy infrastructure just to stick to the status quo of fossil fuel energy. She argued that energy

diversification is the biggest step that any community could take toward energy security.

[2:00:58 PM](#)

MR. EPSTEIN said that "energy freedom is the freedom to use the most cost-effective form of energy" and it doesn't make sense to force someone to use energy that they can't afford. He opined that there has been "hostility" toward Alaska's oil policy and urged the committee to take action to stop the "oppression" from the Federal Government.

MR. EPSTEIN thanked the committee for its time.

[2:04:34 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.