

SCOMM

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Alaska State Legislature

Senate Committee on Oil and Gas


Senator Sam Cotten, Chairman
Senator Drue Pearce, Vice-Chairman
Senator Bettye Fahrenkamp
Senator Lyman F. Hoffman
Senator Dick Shultz



P. O. Box V, State Capital
Juneau, AK 99811
(907) 465-3711

April 23, 1991

To: Members, Senate Oil and Gas Committee

From: Sam Cotten, Chair 

The House Oil and Gas Committee has been hearing testimony on HJR 36, relating to off-shore oil exploration, development and tanker transportation. This Friday (at 3:00 in room 124) they will be hearing testimony from members of the oil industry. The committee has invited our Senate committee to attend.

The meeting will be teleconferenced, and will be the first to use the video-teleconferencing system.

The House committee has adopted a CS of the resolution; a draft of that CS and a memorandum from Chairman Hudson are attached. I urge you to attend.



Alaska State Legislature

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Official Business

Special Committee on Oil and Gas
Bill Hudson - Chairman

P.O. Box V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

DATE: April 22, 1991

TO: Senator Cotten, Chairman Senate Oil and Gas

SUBJECT: Industry Testimony - HJR 36

This Friday, April 26th, the House Special Committee on Oil and Gas will be meeting to hear the oil industry's testimony on HJR 36 (Relating to off-shore oil exploration, development and tanker transportation in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas). I believe that this will be a very informational meeting on a somewhat controversial topic and I invite you and your committee to attend. We will be meeting in the House Resources Conference room (124) at 3 pm.

This hearing will be teleconferenced state-wide with the addition of a television monitoring system. This is brand new technology which the Legislative Information Office would like to demonstrate and I have agreed to try it in our hearing.

I have included a copy of HJR 36 and a copy of the Committee substitute for your information. The CS was just adopted by the committee and the drafters have not completed the final, but it will give you an idea of where our committee has been headed.

Bill

PROPOSED CS FOR HJR 36 (by ~~Bill Hudson~~ ^{Oil & Gas})

1 Relating to off-shore oil exploration, development, and tanker
2 activities in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

3 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 WHEREAS, the state supports the prudent and orderly
5 development of the state's oil and gas reserves in an
6 environmentally sound manner; and

7 WHEREAS, the state has been responsive to the nation's
8 need to decrease its dependence on foreign oil; and

9 WHEREAS, there is a high probability that the coastal
10 plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge contains
11 economically recoverable oil reserves; and

12 WHEREAS, the oil industry has demonstrated that properly
13 regulated onshore oil and gas exploration, development and
14 transportation can occur in an environmentally sound manner;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, following an expedited environmental assessment
17 by his Outer Continental Shelf Task Force, the President
18 announced in June 1990 the closure until the year 2000 of
19 large outer continental shelf tracts off the coast of
20 California, Florida, New England, and the Northwest to oil and
21 gas leasing and activities; and

1 WHEREAS, the Outer Continental Shelf Task Force has not
2 yet been asked by the President to complete a similar
3 environmental assessment for off-shore areas totalling some
4 40,000,000 acres in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas which are
5 scheduled for leasing by the federal government in 1991; and

6 WHEREAS Alaska water, particularly arctic water, deserves
7 the same, if not higher, scrutiny regarding the wisdom and
8 environmental safety of oil and gas activities as was given
9 to water off-shore of the contiguous states; and

10 WHEREAS, the Beaufort and Chukchi seas are among the
11 world's most dynamic and relatively unspoiled wildlife
12 habitats, containing critical feeding and breeding grounds,
13 rest and brooding areas, and migratory corridors where a wide
14 variety of marine mammal, bird, and fish species
15 concentrate; and

16 WHEREAS, the Inupiat people largely derive their
17 nutritional needs and cultural identity through the
18 traditional harvest of marine species, particularly the
19 bowhead whale, and other marine mammals; and

20 WHEREAS, the Chukchi and Beaufort seas are
21 characterized by extreme weather conditions, including
22 prolonged ice cover and darkness, frigid temperatures, high
23 winds and waves, and low visibility; and

24 WHEREAS, the Alaska Oil Spill Commission, the Arctic
25 Research Commission, and the Minerals Management Service have

1 each acknowledged that effective oil spill response options
2 under certain arctic conditions for remote arctic waters
3 remains undemonstrated; and

4 WHEREAS, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, P.L. 101-380, 104
5 stat. 484, which passed Congress in August of 1990, directed
6 the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the
7 Governor of Alaska, to prepare an extensive report on a
8 number of issues relating to off-shore oil spill contingency
9 planning in the Arctic, including compilations of known data
10 relating to potentially affected wildlife resources; existing
11 drilling and spill response technology; past, present, and
12 proposed exploratory operations; and specifically Native
13 Alaskan concerns;

14 WHEREAS, initial scientific data indicates that marine
15 mammals and birds in the Arctic react to industrial noise;
16 including noise from drilling, icebreaker, seismic
17 activities, aircraft overflights and other vessel
18 disturbances; and

19 BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature believes
20 that the oil industry has yet to conclusively demonstrate the
21 ability to adequately respond to, contain, or clean up a
22 significant oil spill in arctic waters under commonly
23 occurring environmental conditions; and be it

24 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature
25 believes that lease sales in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

1 must be approached in an extremely cautious way with complete
2 participation by the people residing in the impacted areas
3 who are the most knowledgeable about arctic conditions; and
4 be it

5 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Legislature believes
6 that the report mandated by Congress, in the Oil Pollution Act
7 of 1990, should be reviewed and an environmental assessment
8 of off-shore industrial operations in the Arctic be conducted
9 before further oil and gas exploration and development
10 activities take place in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas; and
11 be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature
13 believes that more research is needed focusing on the unique
14 and unpredictable conditions found in the Arctic, in terms of
15 oil spill contingency plans, the impact of exploration
16 and development in general as well as specific research to
17 determine the impact of industrial noise on marine mammals
18 and the bowhead whale in particular.

19 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable
20 George Bush, President of the United States; to the Honorable
21 Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States and President
22 of the U.S. Senate; to the Honorable Thomas S. Foley, Speaker
23 of the U.S. House of Representatives; to the Honorable Manuel
24 Lujan, Jr., Secretary of the Interior; to Barry Williamson,
25 Director of the Minerals Management Service; and to the

1 Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S.
2 Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative,
3 members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.