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Joint Committee on Natural Gas Pipelines

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Committee Discusses Recommendations to 23rd Alaska Legislature

ANCHORAGE – The Joint Committee on Natural Gas Pipelines gaveled in Monday to discuss recommendations they will submit to the Twenty-Third Alaska Legislature when it convenes in January.

Draft recommendations were distributed Monday afternoon following a full morning of testimony from oil and gas industry representatives. The recommendations call on the next legislature to retain the Joint Committee and to continue supporting a southern gas line from Prudhoe Bay to the lower 48.

The committee will also recommend hiring their own pipeline experts, if the next administration continues to impede the legislature's ability to protect the interests of Alaska by withholding information, as was the case under the Knowles/Ulmer administration.

“This committee will have a new face next year, but I believe we are leaving a good legacy and a road map for our successors to utilize and improve upon,” said Rep. Joe Green, (R-Anchorage) committee vice-chair. “This gas line is not a panacea, as it will not produce a fraction of the revenue we have seen generated by the Trans-Alaskan oil pipeline, but it will be a needed economic shot in the arm.”

The committee also adopted two proposals of support, which committee chair, Sen. John Torgerson (R-Kasiloff) and Rep. Green will carry to Washington D.C. and lobby in favor of sometime in mid-September.

The two issues are supporting the “Tax Mechanism,” which oil and gas giants Phillips and BP say must be in place for the gas pipeline project will go forward. And lobbying for support of the Senate version of the Alaska Pipeline Act, which includes provision banning the so-called over the top route and would provide access to gas for in-state consumption. The provisions of the act also include access to use of the pipeline by gas exploration companies other than just the major producers.

“We are going to D.C. in an attempt to garner assurances that the final committee bill, now being discussed in a congressional conference committee, retains all of the current provision of the Alaska Pipeline Act,” said Sen. Torgerson. “We don't want to see any changes to this delicately balanced legislation, which could further impede the construction of this pipeline.”

The Joint Committee on Natural Gas Pipeline plans to meet one more time shortly after the general election. The committee will say good-bye to Sen. Torgerson, Sen. Rick Halford (R-Chugiak), Sen. Pete Kelly (R-Fairbanks), Rep. Brian Porter (R-Anchorage) and Rep. Green.

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