



## Alaska State Legislature Senate Majority News

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### **Legislators Take Alaska Issues to Energy Council** *Annual Conference Keeps Natural Gas In Spotlight*

(Juneau)—Legislators attending an energy conference in Washington D.C. brought home the message that Alaska natural gas is an increasingly critical component to an impending national energy crisis.

“The consistent message has been that there is a very real energy shortage and Alaska’s gas is part of the solution, it’s a matter of when,” said Sen. Scott Ogan (R-Mat-Su/Chugiak), who serves as this year’s chairman of The Energy Council and attended the 2004 Federal Energy and Environmental Matters Conference, held jointly with the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission March 11-14.

“The outlook for gas for power generation is pretty grim in the Lower 48 because the demand is far out stripping the supplies,” said Sen. Ogan, one of three senators who attended the conference.

As this year’s chairman of The Energy Council, Sen. Ogan was seated with keynote speaker Gale Norton, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Secretary Norton gave a presentation on cutting edge habitat and visual mitigation measures associated with oil and gas development that are being implemented in western states. The measures are needed to reduce the impacts of development on habitat for the sage grouse and other species, and to preserve the view shed in newly developed areas.

“Secretary Norton strongly advocated ‘best management practices’ in the development of oil and gas resources to ensure clean energy for a bright future,” Ogan said. “These were impressive examples of how to do it right and still meet the increasing demand for energy.”

The Energy Council is an organization of elected legislators from 10 energy-producing states, five Canadian provinces and Venezuela. This conference offered Alaskan legislators the opportunity for direct dialogue with senior federal officials and their fellow state and provincial legislators in other areas of the Western Hemisphere.

Ogan said he met with Canadian energy officials, who have agreed to attend a joint Energy Council/ Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) summit in July in Victoria, BC, with a focus on the northwest energy picture.

Eagle River Republican Sen. Fred Dyson is PNWER chairman, and attended the conference, along with Kenai Republican Sen. Tom Wagoner.

“The Energy Council is always a marvelous opportunity for me to learn from some of North America’s energy experts. This year I was particularly interested in the forecast and developments on global gas supplies, particularly on the Pacific Rim where Alaska’s gas may have to compete,” Dyson said. “I am more convinced than ever that Alaska’s gas can get to market as cheap or more cheaply than imported LNG. Maybe not on the West Coast, but certainly in the Great Lakes area and the North West by pipeline.”

Other topics of interest to Dyson were marine transportation of compressed natural gas, carbon sequestration and new technology for liberating petroleum from tar sands that requires less heat.

“Their development of that technology could be very useful in helping Alaska figure out how to economically raise our viscous oil at Prudhoe,” Dyson said.

“I also followed very closely the developments in clean coal technology. Alaska has a huge portion of North America’s very rich coal deposits and at some time it will be economic to develop those resources,” Sen. Dyson said. “If others have developed ways of doing it that are non-polluting and not a health threat, it will be a major advantage to Alaska and to North America’s energy independence.”

Sen. Wagoner said the conference heightened his awareness of the need for more refining capacity. With the United States currently at near capacity for refining fuels, a major disruption could have catastrophic consequences, he said.

“Are we going to export jobs and import foreign refined products, or are we going to look at the feasibility of building new refining capabilities in the U.S.?” Wagoner asked, adding that he learned during the conference that voters recently rejected a proposed re-gasification plant in Maine, further exacerbating the supply problem.

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