

Oil spill liability bill re-introduced

Rep. Don Young (R-AK) and Rep. Gerry Studds (D-MA) have re-introduced in the House of Representatives legislation that would provide a comprehensive system of liability and compensation for damage caused by oil pollution. The bill is virtually identical to legislation passed by the House of Representatives in the 98th Congress.

"The potential for extensive damage to property and resources from oil spills is of great concern to Alaska, which has more coastline than the Lower 48," Young said. "The Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee has recommended legislation in

the past to prevent pollution damage to our coastal and marine environment, which Congress ultimately adopted. This oil spill legislation is a logical compliment to these measures so that cleanup is facilitated, and victimized and damaged parties are compensated," he added.

The Act, if passed, contains a comprehensive enumeration of the scope of damages and claims to insure adequate and just coverage; sets limits of liability for vessels and facilities consistent with international standards; excludes natural gas seepage; and permits states, even with limited

preemption, to retain and use their own funds.

It would also create a separate government corporation to administer claims and cleanup responsibilities; remove the restrictions in existing law for cleanup to an acceptable standard; implement international oil pollution liability conventions when ratified by the United States; and consolidate various existing federal oil spill laws.

The legislation has been referred to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee where hearings are scheduled for March 27, 1985.