

Mike Bradner Urges State Push Alaskan Hire by Oil Companies

State Rep. Mike Bradner, D-Fairbanks, has proposed that the state impose a special requirement insuring the hiring of resident Alaskans on all state oil leases awarded as a result of the September sale of North Slope Oil lands.

Bradner in a letter to Gov. Keith H. Miller said he believed that imposing such a requirement may be administratively possible.

The Fairbanks legislator told Miller that there has been "a lot of talk about hiring resident Alaskans on the North Slope but there has been little progress."

"I think it is time we stopped talking and started showing strength and direction in determining the rules of the game in the development of our oil resources," Bradner said.

"And primary among these rules should be an absolute insistence by the state in the area of employment of Alaskans."

Bradner further stated that in the event that such a requirement is not administratively possible the state should then challenge the oil companies to make

voluntary commitments for local hire on their leases as part of the bidding process.

"I propose that the companies be voluntarily allowed to add an addendum to their lease bids stipulating to the training and hiring of Alaskans if awarded the lease," Bradner said.

The Fairbanks legislator said the keen competition which appears to be shaping the September sale may result in a condition of nearly equal bids in many cases.

"In such a case the state would give preference to the firm who stipulates that they would train and hire Alaskans," Bradner added.

"We have made little progress to date in promoting on-the-job training and the hiring of resident Alaskans in the oil industry, with the result that the economic benefits of that industry is substantially lessened to the state.

"In addition the social contribution of the industry is lessened when we cannot gage what this industry does for a wage earning family man, living in Alaska, paying his bills and taxes here, and raising his family here.

"When we talk about developing our state it should be guided by the principle of what it does for people in the sense of producing a better life and making Alaska a better place to live.

"But if we get lost in 'development for development's sake' then we risk a reckless pace of development that can damage our resources, our wilderness environment, and which may fail in making a better life for Alaskan residents.

Bradner said the proposal to require Alaska hire on the state leases could be regulated in such a way as to allow a phase in period during which the industry could be allowed to average out between state and federal leases.

This would allow Alaskans in the beginning to be mixed in with experienced crews.

Bradner, who chairs the House Rules Committee, indicated if the voluntary approach were adopted then firms offering Alaska hire would provide a powerful wedge against remaining firms.

In addition firms might offer various plans or proposals for training and hiring of Alaskans in steps.