

ANWR

Senate Energy Committee to begin hearings Oct. 13

The Senate Energy Committee is expected to begin hearings Oct. 13 on legislation to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing, according to Sen. Frank Murkowski.

Spokesmen for Murkowski said Sen. Bennett Johnston, committee chairman, announced recently that the majority of the committee indicated to him in an informal poll that they want to proceed with the ANWR issue this Congress.

Johnston said the committee would begin consideration of legislation introduced earlier this year by Murkowski that directs the secretary of the Department of Interior to lease land in the Coastal Plain of ANWR for oil and gas exploration and development.

Johnston also said it is his intention

to move the ANWR legislation out of the committee this year so that it could be before the full Senate early next session.

Murkowski said it is important for the panel to move ahead with the bill.

"The challenge before us today on ANWR is directly related to the situation in the Persian Gulf — the reality that we and our allies are going to be relying more and more on an insecure source for our energy needs," he said.

"The United States is not finding new sources of oil to replace what we are using. This is the responsibility of the Senate Energy Committee. I think this committee is up to that responsibility, and we're addressing it in the appropriate manner by moving ahead and beginning the legislative process to open ANWR."