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Printed on Sep 16, 2020

Ethics Reform Bills Moving Slowly

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JUNEAU (AP) — Two legislative ethics-reform bills are moving slowly and quietly through the Legislature this session, in contrast to the unusual haste and fanfare that accompanied last year's ethics legislation.

That's to be expected, lawmakers say, after last year's speedy process produced a thick, confusing bill that few legislators liked. It won Senate approval, but failed to pass the House in the session's final minutes.

"We got it all on the last night," recalled Rep. Gene Kubina, D-Valdez. "We want people to vote on it out of some knowledge, not emotion."

Most of the work on ethics reform so far has been in the House State Affairs Committee, which Kubina heads. It held its third hearing Monday on Rep. David Finkelstein's House Bill 4.

The bill would impose new restrictions on campaign fund-raising, expand financial disclosure requirements for lawmakers and candidates, and create an ethics commission independent of the Legislature.

The committee is going through the 46-page bill line by line, and so far has made only technical changes. Kubina said he expects the panel to finish its work with the bill next week.

But before a floor vote, the bill still faces review in the Judiciary and Finance committees. "This isn't going to fly through the other committees, either," said Finkelstein, D-Anchorage.

One reason for the slow deliberations is that each lawmaker has strong opinions on ethics reform, and they vary widely. "There is nothing that has as much detailed effect on every legislator," Finkelstein said.

In the Senate, a special committee has been formed to consider ethics legislation. Sen. Virginia Collins, R-Anchorage and the committee chairwoman, has proposed a bill that's less far-reaching and detailed.

"We want to make sure the bill that we pass makes sense, that it's reasonable, workable and enforceable," Collins said.

Finkelstein has suggested one major change to his bill: removing a legislative pay raise. The bill would increase lawmakers' annual salaries from $22,148 to $36,000, but it would eliminate discretionary "per diem."

Discretionary per diem is for work in lawmakers' home districts between sessions. Some legislators claim none; others claim more than $7,000 a year.

The Alaska Supreme Court has proposed legislation that would create an independent salary commission, which would set legislators' salaries. HB129 also is in the State Affairs Committee, which is expected to approve it soon.

Finkelstein said he is convinced that taking the pay issue out of lawmakers' hands altogether is the best solution. Kubina said he expects the committee will agree and remove the raise from the ethics bill.

"A lot of people think they should not be tied together, that you do not buy a person's salary with an ethics bill," Kubina said.

The committee may also remove the campaign-finance provisions and place them in a separate bill, he said. Collins said her committee is looking at a similar approach to campaign-finance reform.

Finkelstein's bill would place stricter limits on the use of surplus campaign money, and restrict fund-raising to between June 1 of the year before the election through the general election. Legislators and other elected officials would be unable to raise money from Jan. 1 through May 31 of the election year. That's the period when the Legislature is in session.

Collins' ethics bill is based on changes suggested by the 1990 Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, the panel of lawmakers and citizens that enforces Alaska's legislative ethics law. The 12-page draft has yet to be formally introduced.

Like Finkelstein's bill, the Collins proposal would ban former lawmakers from lobbying for one year after they leave office; ban lawmakers from accepting honoraria or outside jobs that would pose a conflict of interest; ban lobbyists from serving as campaign treasurers; and ban fund-raising during legislative sessions.

But Collins' bill would not form an independent ethics commission. It would keep legislators in the role of policing themselves. And Collins' bill includes no pay raise. She said that issue should not be decided by lawmakers or a commission.

"The question really is, 'Do we want citizen representative legislators or professional legislators?' It's a decision that has to be made by the public," she said.

The Senate is likely to take a more general approach to ethics legislation than the House, Collins said. "I don't think it's going to be less comprehensive. It's just going to be dealt with in a different manner."

PERFECT SCORES — Students named to the Chancellor's List at the University of Alaska Southeast, Sitka Campus, were, left to right, Holly B. Coulter, Colleen M. Dahlquist, Shannon T. Donohue and Jennifer Hass. The four maintained grade point averages of 4.00, or straight A, during the fall semester. (Sentinel photo)

Alaska Shipping Firm Owner Held in Seattle

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The owner of an Alaska shipping company has been arrested at a hotel in Seattle on charges he is a convicted arsonist who walked away from an Arizona halfway house in 1981.

J.R. Marine Inc. owner Jim Leroy Robinson was arrested Friday by Seattle police on charges he is escaped arsonist Kenneth Harvey Robertson, officials said.

Robinson was being held Monday night at Seattle's King County Jail on $10,000 bail.

Mike Arra, a spokesman for the Arizona Department of Corrections, said extradition proceedings were under way. Arra said Arizona has wanted Robinson since June 1981, when he walked away from a halfway house with 18 months left on a four-year sentence for arson of an unoccupied structure.

Robinson has been a key figure in several important events in Alaska. He was a key trial witness in the mass murder trial of John Peel in Ketchikan in 1986.

Exxon Corp. has sued him for allegedly paying bribes to a contract official during its Valdez oil spill cleanup.

And Robinson is owner of the Red Jacket, a ship that in late November lost two crewmen in the Aleutian Islands under what federal officials say were suspicious circumstances.

An Anchorage newspaper revealed last week that Robinson also had been identified in the Peel trial as the arsonist from Arizona, and that prosecutors at the time did not notify Arizona authorities.

That news report led Arizona authorities to renew their efforts to have him arrested, said Jim Roose, chief of fugitive services for the Arizona Department of Corrections.

Robinson entered the shipping business in 1989 by chartering 12 vessels to Exxon for its Prince William Sound oil spill cleanup after the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

In November of last year crewmen Sam Batchelder and John Slagill were lost from the Red Jacket, an oil field services boat belonging to Robinson that was towing a barge to the Aleutian villages of Atka. The Red Jacket lost the barge, then reportedly put the two men on uninhabited Segnam Island. The men disappeared.

A coroner's hearing on whether or not to declare the men dead is scheduled in Homer on Wednesday.

The Red Jacket is at a Seattle marine yard undergoing repairs. Robinson was arrested at the University Plaza Hotel, near the shipyard.

Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Richard Blais in Anchorage said he also had given Seattle police a list of safety and licensing violations — including the negligent operation of the Red Jacket — the Coast Guard has filed and plans to file against Robinson and his employees.

The U.S. Customs Service and the Alaska State Troopers also have said they are investigating the company and the disappearance of the two Red Jacket crewmen.

Robinson's lawyers in Seattle and Arizona refused to comment on his arrest. But Howard Robertson, a J.R. Marine executive, said Monday evening he was working to get Robinson released.

"I don't know a damn thing right at the moment," he said. "I just got word, and I've been fighting it on this end trying to get it straightened out."

Arco Board Approves Developing Alaska Field

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Atlantic Richfield Co.'s directors gave a go-ahead Monday to develop the huge Point McIntyre oil field on Alaska's North Slope at a cost of well over $200 million to the company.

Arco, Exxon and British Petroleum share in the 300-million-barrel field, which could help offset declining North Slope production. Discovered in 1988, it was described as the biggest domestic oil find in a decade.

Exxon and BP have yet to approve funds to develop the site, located on state-owned land. Arco's plans call for initial production by late 1992, processing the oil through existing Lisburne field facilities.

The Point McIntyre field is located about two miles north of Prudhoe Bay, with some oil onshore and some offshore. The new drilling sites would be onshore.

Production from the Prudhoe Bay area was a bit less than 1.4 million barrels in 1990, with overall North Slope production at 1.8 million barrels, a decline of nearly 5 percent from 1989.

Both the state and the North Slope Borough, the local government, have approved permits for the site, said Robert E. Wycoff, Arco's president and chief operating officer.

Development of the field is expected to generate 800 construction jobs and an estimated $1.8 billion in Alaska state taxes and royalties over the life of the field, Arco said.

Initial production from the combined Lisburne and Point McIntyre fields is expected to be 80,000 barrels a day, increasing to 100,000 barrels a day at its peak.

Arco's exact stake in the Point McIntyre field hasn't been established. It will be between 50 percent and 40 percent, said Albert Greenstein, a spokesman for the Los Angeles-based energy company.

Arco has estimated the total cost of developing Point McIntyre at $727 million. Figuring Arco's share at 30 percent, the company would spend $218 million; at 40 percent, $291 million.

The Persian Gulf crisis has complicated the worldwide oil picture. Prices soared, then plunged as Saudi Arabia and other countries stepped up production, causing a worldwide oil glut.

The vote by Arco's directors signals that, despite the uncertainties, the company is ready to shoulder its share of the development costs of the Point McIntyre field, which include building two new drilling sites.

Subsistence Director Quits After 11 Years with Division

JUNEAU (AP) — The director of the state Department of Fish and Game's Subsistence Division has resigned after 11 years with the department.

Steve Behnke said he was uncomfortable with the direction that Gov. Walter J. Hickel's administration is taking with subsistence hunting and fishing rights, and it was "time to move on."

The resignation is effective March 8, Behnke said Monday. He has been division director for eight years.

The federal government last year took over subsistence game management on federal lands in the state after the Alaska Supreme Court threw out the state's rural preference for subsistence hunting and fishing rights. Federal law requires a rural preference.

Hickel has formed a subsistence advisory council to advise him how to resolve the state's dilemma over subsistence. The move was prompted by widespread criticism of his appointment of Ron Somerville as deputy fish and game commissioner.

Somerville has long opposed a rural subsistence preference.

New Schedule

The Cancer Support Group holds meetings on the first Tuesday of each month, beginning at 7 p.m., at the St. Peter's-by-the-Sea Church Sea House.

Moose Lodge
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Come see the newly remodeled downstairs & enjoy great food & fun!
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New Classes To Begin At UAS Sitka

Six new classes and workshops will be offered through the University of Alaska Southeast, Sitka Campus, beginning Saturday.

"I've Got to Get Organized," 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday. A non-credit workshop to help create a more orderly and rewarding life. Taught by visiting counselor Audrey Inbody, the workshop includes home, time and money management skills.

"Norwegian Knitting," 1-4 p.m. Sunday. This one-credit creative arts workshop will meet for four Sunday afternoons, with participants learning to knit either an adult Norwegian sweater or four-needle socks. In addition to the Sunday sessions, instructor Lofie Peel will meet on Wednesday evenings with any participant who needs additional help with the project.

"Introduction to Microcomputers," 5-7 p.m. March 6. This course introduces the first-time or inexperienced computer user to the basic elements of microcomputer operations, using the MacIntosh software programs MacWrite and MacPaint. Taught by Mary Lauer, the one credit class will meet each Wednesday for five weeks; participants may then complete the course on a self-paced basis.

"Beginning Handweaving," March 7-10. Students will learn the fundamentals weaving, using a four-harness table loom. A hands-on class, the new weaver will complete a first weaving project under the direction of Kristie Sherrodd. Class sessions will include 6-9 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and 1-4 p.m. Sunday.

"Foundation Design and Repair," 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. March 9 and 14. This workshop looks at soil engineering, site preparation, drainage and basic foundation design, as well as the nature of concrete and techniques for reinforcement. The class will include test information and lecture, as well as on-site inspection of various foundation types.

"Retirement: The Rest Should Be the Best," 9 a.m.-3 p.m. March 9. Retirement can be either a shattering personal experience or a celebration of life experience. This one-day non-credit seminar will help participants understand what retirement means and how to plan so it will be enjoyable, satisfying and challenging.

AARP Bake Sale Saturday

Sitka Chapter 4386 AARP will sponsor a bake sale 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday in the NBA lobby.

Members should take baked goods to the National Bank of Alaska by 9:30 a.m.

Congratulations

Congratulations are extended to the following persons listed on the Sitka High School Dance/Drill Team calendar.

Kimberly Till, Debbie Smith, Albert Duncan, Ginny Jenkins and Jackie McGregor are listed with birthdays for today.

Bad Weather Slowing Down Mushers in Yukon Quest Race

CARMACKS, Yukon Territory (AP) — Mushers who endured above-freezing temperatures Monday that created wet and sleshy conditions are out on the second leg of the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race.

Mushers were slowed down by conditions on the second day of the 960-mile race from Whitehorse, Yukon Territory to Fairbanks.

Bruce Lee of Denali Park was the first musher into Carmacks Monday, taking just less than 24 hours to complete the first leg of the race, which began Sunday. The distance from Whitehorse to Carmacks is 140 miles.

"Being first doesn't have any significance," said Lee, who arrived in Carmacks at about 11:30 a.m. AST. "It's how much rest people get getting here that matters."

A layover of two to four hours in Carmacks is required, but the leaders stayed much longer than that, waiting for dark to bring colder temperatures and firmer trails.

Late in the afternoon Monday 22 of the 35 mushers in the race were in Carmacks. By 9 p.m. AST Monday seven of the mushers had gone on.

Soft trail conditions appeared to improve as the day went on, according to mushers who arrived after Lee.

"There was some overflow on the lakes but other than that it was a good trail and good weather," said Charlie Boulding of Nenana.

Francois Varigas of Dawson City, Yukon, who was third arriving in Carmacks about 25 minutes behind Lee, was the first musher to set out on the 300-mile leg to Dawson. He left Carmacks at 5:56 p.m. AST, with Lee leaving two minutes later.

Varigas said the trail was good but slow and he sounded happy with the pace his dogs had taken to Carmacks.

"I don't want them to go any faster," he said.

David Scheer of Kasilof left third, followed by John Schandelmeier of Paxson, Boulding, and Will and Linda Forsberg of Sunspot.

The race has already started to claim casualties.

The first musher to scratch was Jeff Currey of Fairbanks. The trouble-plagued rookie called it quits at a rest-stop halfway to Carmacks after trying to fix a broken sled.

Race officials said Monday that Peter Buttert of Tok and Jim Hendrick of Fairbanks will have to serve eight-hour penalties in Carmacks for dropping dogs on the trail.

Jim Wilson of Ambler was fifth into Carmacks, but he was packing two dogs. He said one 2-year-old had given out and the other "is just not a great dog."

Head veterinarian Jeannie Olsen said the dogs are holding up well so far.

"On this kind of snow you see either bad feet or swollen wrists but everyone's looking pretty good. You can see when they come in, they all want to eat and so on."

The race is expected to finish in the middle of next week, with the winner taking home $25,000.

Environmentalist Reps in Sitka

Representatives of Greenpeace will meet with fishermen concerned about dioxins in the marine environment 10 a.m. Saturday at the NSRAA building, 1308 Sawmill Creek Road.

The representatives will discuss recently released information concerning human and environmental health risks associated with dioxins formed from bleaches dumped into marine environments by sawmills.

The meeting is open to the public.

Board to Meet

Members of the Sitka Community Hospital Board will meet in regular session 7 p.m. Thursday.

The meeting will be held in classroom B and is open to the public.

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Tax Assistance Program Given

The University of Alaska Southeast Adult Education Program will sponsor a free tax assistance program March 5 through April 30.

Those needing tax assistance may meet with Carole Denkinger, IRS volunteer VITA coordinator, 7-8 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at UAS room 215. Appointments for homebound individuals may be arranged.

Participants should take a copy of their 1989 tax return, 1990 income information and additional information required to complete the return including statements from bank accounts or mortgage interest.

Those needing further information should contact Denkinger at 747-8310 evenings or Teresa Holt at 747-6653.

Rescheduled

Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV) will hold its weekly Women's Support Group and Children's Support Group on Thursday this week.

The groups will meet at the usual locations and times.

Next week, meetings will return to Wednesday.

Those needing further information should call SAFV at 747-3370.

Workshop Set

The Adult Education Program of the University of Alaska Southeast will host a free workshop "Effective Job Interviewing" 9 a.m. to noon Saturday.

Workshop presenter Teresa Holt will discuss preparing for a job interview, types of interviews, anticipating questions, making a good impression and relaxation techniqes.

Those needing further information should contact Holt at 747-6653.

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