

Majority Statements

Ted Stevens

Statement of Ted Stevens

Hearing: The Reauthorization of the Pipeline Safety Program

Thursday, November 16, 2006

Opening Statement of Chairman Ted Stevens:

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has jurisdiction that covers approximately 160,000 miles of hazardous liquid interstate transmission pipelines, 305,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipelines, and 1.9 million miles of natural gas distribution pipelines throughout our nation. Generally, this administration is responsible for overseeing interstate transmission pipelines, while the states are responsible for monitoring the safety of intrastate pipelines.

The state's authority is delegated by the administration to the intrastate pipelines safety offices. The administration also allows state officials to act as agents in administering interstate pipeline safety programs excluding enforcement actions which are handled by the administration directly for those sections of the interstate pipelines which are within a states boundaries. Now, pipelines are one of the safest forms of transportation and in most cases there safety records are slightly improved. Unfortunately, recent events in our state of Alaska demonstrate there is much that can be done. All of that, by the way, occurred in 22 miles of pipe.

In September, Senator Inouye, Senator Lott and Senator Lautenberg and I introduced legislation known as the Pipes Act to reauthorize and strengthen the federal pipeline safety programs through the fiscal year 2007-2010. This comprehensive bill is based upon the draft pipeline safety authorization legislation submitted by the administration, reports and testimony from the Government Accountability Office and the Department of Transportations Inspector General. In addition, representatives from the pipeline safety advocate community, many of whom are represented, and the witnesses here today, also provided valuable input and perspective. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee are also working on pipeline safety legislation. A total of three hearings pertaining to pipeline safety were held in the house, and our Alaska delegation held a listening session in October on the overall topic.

I appreciate Vice Admiral Barrett and his staff for driving down to Anchorage to be with us at that listening session. It is my hope that the three of our committees can work together to develop a joint legislative product that both chambers will pass this year. We've had contact with the House, and the House has been willing to work towards a bill prepared that can pass in the first week of December. As far as I know there are no political differences with regard to the goals of this bill. I hope this hearing will produce the information we need to proceed to work with the House and to work out a bill before the first week in December.