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ALASKA NATURAL GAS TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 1976 (S. 3521)

The House today is scheduled to consider legislation to provide a process for arriving at a decision on selecting a transportation system for delivery of Alaska natural gas to U.S. markets.

ACTION BY THE 94TH CONGRESS

- Ordered reported by Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee Sept. 16 (voice)
 - Reported September 22 (H. Rpt. 94-1658, Part I)
 - Ordered reported by Interior and Insular Affairs Committee Sept. 29 (voice) with amendment (see below)
 - Passed Senate July 1 (voice)
 - Rules Committee Sept. 28 granted open rule, one hour debate with time to be equally divided between the chairmen and ranking minority members of the Interstate and Interior Committees.
- Floor Managers: Congressman Dingell (Interstate) and Congressman Melcher (Interior)

BILL SUMMARY

As reported by both the Interstate Committee and the Interior Committee, the legislation would establish a four-stage process for arriving at a decision with respect to selecting a transportation system for the delivery of Alaska natural gas to the lower 48 states.

It would direct the Federal Power Commission (FPC) to suspend current proceedings pursuant to which three contesting applicants are seeking issuance of a certificate of public convenience and necessity authorizing construction of a gas transportation system and require a FPC review and report to the President by May 1, 1977. The Commission may recommend approval of a particular system or advise that no system should be approved.

Stage two would provide opportunity for federal agencies, state governors and other interested persons to comment on the report's recommendations. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) would be given specific responsibilities to hold hearings on the environmental impact statements relative to the alternative transportation systems and to comment formally to the President. CEQ reports and other comments are to be submitted to the President by July 1, 1977.

The President would have until September 1, 1977 to accept the FPC recommendation or designate an alternative system, if he determined that a system should be built. His decision would be submitted to the Congress with a supporting report.

In stage three, Congress would review the President's decision under expedited procedures designed to assure that no single member or committee may block a vote on whether to approve the President's decision. For the decision to take effect, Congress must enact a joint resolution of approval within a 60-day period following its receipt by both Houses. If the resolution is not enacted, the President would have 30 days in which to make and submit a new recommendation to the Congress.

The fourth phase would direct federal agencies whose permission is needed for construction to issue necessary certificates, permits, rights-of-way and leases and provides for limited judicial review of the actions of the agencies.

In addition, Interior and Insular Affairs reported the bill with amendments including the following: (1) to direct a Presidential study on assistance to northern tier oil refineries now dependent on Canadian oil; (2) to require that an overland or water gas transportation system include delivery to both the West and the Midwest; (3) to permit Alaska to withdraw royalty gas from an interstate pipeline if the gas is needed within the state; and (4) to increase the scope of judicial review procedures under phase four.

COST:

Cost of the bill is estimated at a maximum of \$4.5 million for fiscal 1978 and for each of the next five fiscal years.