

Alaska Oilfield Support via Advocacy

'Efforts are broad and far reaching'

By Tom Anderson

When it comes to commerce in Alaska, it doesn't get any larger than oil and gas sector development.

In concert, billions of dollars in expenses, thousands of employees, and myriad infrastructure equate to a thriving industry comprising a huge chunk of Alaska's state and municipal budgets. Oil and gas are the lifeblood of the state's economy.

Outside of each petroleum company's communications and public affairs division, a collective of trade association advocacies carry the information torch to the public and policymakers. These nonprofit organizations operate because of the resource development industry's financial support and member contributions.

Absent these few and effective associations, the engines of exploration, extraction, and delivery may not churn quite as easy. Undoubtedly, if it weren't for such advocacies the public would likely not understand the critical importance of development, and legislative support could be compromised.

Alaska Support Industry Alliance

The mission of the Alaska Support Industry Alliance is to "promote responsible exploration, development, and production of oil, gas, and mineral resources for the benefit of all Alaskans."

Executive Director Rebecca Logan and her board of directors accomplish the advocacy's mission through a strong government relations program at both the state and federal level. The organization also implements educational campaigns meant to improve public awareness of the relationship between political decisions, industry activity, and Alaska's economic health.

"We actively participate in each legislative session in Juneau—monitoring any activity that pertains to the oil, gas, and mining industries," says Logan. "We frequently support or oppose bills based on their impact on the resource industries and the support industry. We also have an Independent Expenditure 'We Are Alaska' that we utilize in elections—either supporting or opposing candidates, or supporting or opposing ballot measures," she adds.

At the federal level, the Alliance focuses its efforts on educating the agencies that have oversight of Alaska's resource development like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior. Logan, her directors, and members of the organization intermittently spend time with congressional members from states that benefit from active resource development in Alaska. One example is Rhode Island, where an Alliance contractor spends nearly \$1 million annually to purchase equipment to support an Alaska project.

In 2015 members briefed presidential candidates and their campaigns on the role Alaska can play in solving some of the nation's problems, including energy security, defense, employment, and revenue generation. The Alliance's annual conferences, digital messaging, and website content also supplement both national and statewide outreach efforts.

At the state level, in recent years SB21 (tax reform) and SB138 (enabling legislation for AKLNG) were two critical pieces of legislation that the Alliance as a whole advocated

tics, and industry subject matter including links to pertinent articles and a "Fact Check" section to counter local media and stories that may show inaccuracies. The blog features posts on different topics pertinent to resource development in Alaska including a "Mega Projects" overview to help Alaskans understand the AKLNG project from a different perspective.

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Alaska Oil & Gas Association

As the professional trade association for the oil and gas industry in Alaska, the Alaska Oil & Gas Association (AOGA) is the voice of industry.

"On matters of public policy, AOGA is able to provide policymakers with consensus viewpoints on subjects ranging from taxes, environmental regulations, permitting, and litigation," says Kara Moriarty, president and CEO. "Our efforts support industry by providing consistent feedback to

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for and supported. In addition, defeating the referendum to repeal SB21 was significant victory, and members actively participated in the effort through the "We Are Alaska" campaign. The Alliance is part of State Senator Cathy Giessel's Oil and Gas Tax Credit Working Group and will be working through that group to develop a reasonable approach for a future oil and gas tax credit system.

AK HEADLAMP is a new project the Alliance has launched to bypass the mainstream media and directly message Alaskans. The blog features a daily recap of the previous day's news on Alaska energy, poli-

decision makers on issues that impact the industry as a whole, not just one particular company. When AOGA publicly supports or opposes an issue related to oil and gas, it is safe to say the majority of oil and gas producers, explorers, refiners, transporters, and marketers agree with that position."

Moriarty notes that AOGA is active at all levels of government, including in the Alaska capital of Juneau, Washington, D.C., and in statewide communities if an issue impacts oil and gas operations.

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policymakers, our organization is asked to provide the industry-wide view on proposed laws, regulations, and policies that could impact the industry," she adds. "The efficiency afforded with speaking with one voice gives decision makers at all levels confidence that the industry's view is being represented in a comprehensive manner."

Moriarty, External Affairs Manager Sar-

ah Erkmann, and the entire AOGA management team are very active on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The organization uses multiple online digital tools to inform the public about various aspects of the industry, as well as solicit feedback and answer questions from Alaskans. "AOGA maintains its website with current industry information, and staff members are often out in the community doing informational presentations to groups like Rotary, chambers of commerce, policy groups, students, or whomever wants to learn more about the oil and gas industry in Alaska," says Moriarty.

AOGA has been successful in spearheading efforts to defeat anti-industry ballot initiatives like the contentious oil tax referendum in 2014, as well as building public support for industry operations in Alaska.

Moriarty notes that on the national level, AOGA and its partners have been successful in fighting ill-conceived government regulations, as well as through the judicial process on matters affecting the industry.

"AOGA is consistently working a variety of issues to ensure that any restrictions placed on industry are done so only if the best possible science has been applied and not in such a way as to jeopardize industry's ability to operate in Alaska," adds Moriarty.

Resource Development Council for Alaska

The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) is a statewide, nonprofit, membership-funded organization comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's oil and gas, mining, timber, tourism, and fishing industries.

Led by Executive Director Marleanna Hall, RDC's membership includes all twelve land-owning Alaska Native regional corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. "Our purpose is to link these diverse industries together to encourage a strong, diversified private sector and grow Alaska through responsible resource development," says Hall.

RDC's robust advocacy strength comes from diversity in its membership. "With the broad interests we represent, RDC is able to link a diverse network to help advocate for a strong private sector economy through responsible resource development," says Hall. "RDC tackles many issues these industries face through our involvement with the legislature and with state and federal agencies. RDC rallies its members to public hearings to support projects that will create new jobs, result in new opportunities for Alaskan businesses, and expand our economy."

Hall notes that the nonprofit's efforts are

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broad and far reaching in the state and nationally, including support for oil and gas exploration and development in the Arctic, advancement of the Alaska LNG Project, support for access to and development of new

mineral prospects, support of economic timber sales for the forest products industry, and measures that will grow tourism and sustain our fishing industry.

Similar to other Alaska oil and gas in-

dustry support organizations, the RDC hosts annual events, conferences, forums, and venues of exposure to share news and information with the public and policy-makers. The synergy between print, email, digital, and direct messaging has proven effective in educating recipients on the value of responsible development in Alaska.

A major priority in 2016 is the implementation of a sustainable long-range fiscal plan for Alaska and encouragement of new industry investments to grow the economy over the long term. In complement to the RDC's outreach to members and community, a vibrant online newsletter and annual report archive afford prospective investors in the industry and citizens the opportunity to research and acquaint themselves with demographics, data, and statistics.

Solidarity and Effective Communications

Compared to other states, Alaska may very well have the most cohesive natural resource development trade and industry associations in the nation.

The Alliance, AOGA, and RDC have their roles and implementation down. Whether a letter to Congress, an email to association members, Facebook branding, or support of candidates and policies via a newsletter and visit to a state or federal capitol, they're making a difference independently, collectively, and in unison with resource company communications divisions. These organizations epitomize results-based teamwork, and with the metrics to show success based on decades of blossoming oil and gas development.

The advocacy task is formidable, considering the size of the state. Layers of federal, state, borough, and local bureaucracy further complicate the simple one-on-one conversation of the past.

Yet through websites, social media, annual conferences and research reports, and the strategized outreach to Alaskans and elected officials, Alaska's resource industry advocacies are effective and making a huge difference in the state's commerce. ⚙



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Tom Anderson writes from across Alaska.