

## Stevens Firmly Behind Oil-Tax Reversal Initiative

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The petition to allow Alaskan voters a voice in the debate on oil taxes was turned in last Saturday with far more signatures than required. If certified, it would ask Alaskans to vote in 2014 on repealing the billion-dollar-a-year tax break pushed by Governor Sean Parnell and passed by the legislature this year.

It took several years to get through the State Senate, because of the largely-Democratic majority coalition led by Kodiak Republican Senator Gary Stevens, which opposed the tax giveaway.

After election redistricting, which some decried as Gerrymandering, Stevens lost his position as Senate President late last year. The new Republican-dominated majority easily passed the governor's tax bill, even though Stevens continued to fight against it.

"I gave two speeches on the floor in opposition of the governor's tax giveaway," he said. "I'm very supportive of the petition to put it to a vote of the public. I signed the petition in Kodiak several weeks ago when it first started."

Stevens says the ballot question will allow all Alaskans to debate and learn about the issue.

"I look forward to the opportunity for let the public know the truth of the matter. Hear both sides, weigh the issues and decide if they think the governor's right reducing taxes by a billion dollars, or if we should do something a little more reasonable. I don't think we need to reduce oil taxes on the legacy fields, those are going to keep pumping oil no matter what we do, if we tax it or not, it'll keep pumping, so why would we reduce the taxes there?"

He said incentives would be appropriate for companies finding new oil and sending it town the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline.

"So let's find ways to reduce taxes on companies that put oil into the pipeline when we need it there. So we'll do that," Stevens said. "What I hope is that by the time we get to an election that we'll have some bills in front of the public so they can see that we're not just going to walk away from any changes, we're just going to try — my intent would be to do more moderate changes to oil tax reduction."

If the question does appear on the primary election ballot in 2014, it'll be joined by another round of election boundary changes, where most every current senator and representative will be facing election.