

Tim Bradner: Alaska's Oil Tax Debate is Volatile, Long-Running

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A new tax on Alaska oil and gas production went into effect on Jan. 1. The new law – known by the shorthand SB 21 (for Senate Bill 21) – remains highly controversial.

Opponents call it a “giveaway” to the oil industry. Supporters say it has already spurred several billions of dollars in new investment, and that will produce oil in the future that wouldn't have been produced otherwise.

As a result, a ballot proposition to repeal the tax change will come before voters in the August state primary election.

Alaskans have debated oil taxes for decades but the issue never seems to get settled. As a long-time observer of Alaska oil policy, both as a journalist and as a participant (I was an oil company lobbyist in the 1970s and early 1980s), I've watched this cycle again and again– like watching the movie “Groundhog Day.”

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