

Legislative Summary: A Beginner's Look

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The 63rd Legislative assembly ended with about as much intensity as it began; feverish. Heading into this session, it was understood by all accounts that this would be an important session in the history of the state of North Dakota. Because of the Bakken oil play, our state continues to change, and more funding was needed for communities than it was two years ago. By the end, the Legislature worked almost into the 81st day with just three hours to spare. From a beginner's perspective, it was a pleasure to be a part of. What an exciting time to be involved in state government, to see first-hand how decisions are made and how they could influence generations to come!

From a department perspective, our role needs to continue to evolve just as quickly as the oil play itself. Because of Senate Bill 2014, the Department of Mineral Resources will be able to do just that. Twenty-three new positions were approved for the department, five to be added immediately. More importantly, ten new positions are dedicated to getting more "boots on the ground" so rig and well inspections can keep pace with growth. When all available positions are filled, the department will grow to nearly 100 people, double the staff of six years ago.

Now that the session has ended, the real work for the department begins. Extensive rule making must now be done to incorporate

new laws. House Bill 1333 will require our department to establish a significant, confidential database of pipeline information. This database will be very important going forward as the number of wells and pipelines in the state are expected to grow five- to tenfold in the next 25 years. House Bill 1333 will also provide construction and reclamation standards of pipelines and reclamation of spills from illegal dumping incidents. In addition, it provides a funding mechanism for spill clean-up and reclamation when no responsible party can be identified.

Flaring of natural gas due to lack of pipeline infrastructure continues to be a hot topic for our department. House Bill 1134 will provide tax incentives to encourage operators to use alternative flare gas technologies to harness otherwise flared gas. It is the hope of the department this could drop flaring numbers by as much as 10 percent.

Other bills that will require department rule making include House Bill 1348, surface owner preference of placement of oil and gas tanks and flare stacks; House Bill 1198, recertification of stripper wells; and House Bill 1149, requirements related to agency dissemination of spill reports.



Senate chambers at the North Dakota State Capitol.



House chambers at the North Dakota State Capitol.