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Lawmakers Disagree on Unfinished Work From Session

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By Bill McAllister
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The regular legislative session and a special session have passed, but many lawmakers think some work was left undone.

They just don't necessarily agree on what it is.

Four Anchorage legislators addressed the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce's 'Make it Monday' forum.

Republican Senator Cathy Giessel focused on House Bill 110, proposed by Governor Parnell, to substantially reduce the oil production tax.

"Our critical issue facing the state right now is oil production. How to get more oil in the pipeline. And that's what we need to be focusing, and that's what HB 110 is addressing is, how to adjust our petroleum tax structure so that we're a good reasonable business partner for the companies that can take these resources out of the ground and take them to market."

But Democratic Representative Berta Gardner warned that the coastal zone management plan will end July 1 unless there is another special session.

"Now the coastal plans do not do permitting for you. But if you are in alignment with the coastal management plan, which tells you what the concerns of local people are, the permitting system is smoother, faster and it's expedited. That's important. At the bigger level, it is the state and the local communities' opportunity to be at the table when big projects that impact their communities are coming on the horizon, are being discussed."

Giessel said there will be important reports on oil taxes forthcoming this summer, followed by legislative hearings in the fall.

A House-Senate impasse on the coastal zone bill so far has prevented agreement on a special session to address that topic.