

Second Regular Session
Seventy-third General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 22-0916.02 Megan Waples x4348

HOUSE BILL 22-1391

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

McCluskie, Herod, Ransom

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Hansen and Rankin, Zenzinger

House Committees
Finance

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING THE STATE SEVERANCE TAX ON OIL AND GAS.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)

Joint Budget Committee. The bill changes the calculation of the ad valorem credit allowed against the state severance tax on oil and gas. In tax years beginning on and after January 1, 2024, the credit for ad valorem taxes is calculated on a per-well basis for wells that are not exempt from taxation by applying the prior year's mill levy to the current year's gross income multiplied by an assessment rate of 87.5%, and taking 87.5% of that amount for the credit. This calculation is simplified to multiplying 76.56% of the gross income of the well by the mill levy fixed

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

in the prior calendar year.

A working group consisting of the director of the office of state planning and budgeting and the executive directors of the departments of revenue, natural resources, education, and local affairs, or their designees, is required to develop an implementation plan for making additional changes to the state severance tax on oil and gas. The implementation plan must make recommendations concerning the steps necessary to change the legal incidence of tax from interest owners to operators while maintaining revenue neutrality, require electronic filing of returns for severance taxes, and require additional electronic data collection to the tax.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 hereby finds and declares that:

4 (a) The severance tax, first enacted in 1977, is imposed on
5 nonrenewable natural resources that are removed from the earth,
6 including metallic minerals, molybdenum, oil, gas, and coal;

7 (b) The state severance tax is intended to recapture a portion of
8 the wealth that is lost to the state when nonrenewable resources are
9 removed from the earth;

10 (c) The vast majority of gross collections from the severance tax
11 come from oil and gas production;

12 (d) The severance tax on oil and gas is currently paid by each
13 person owning a working interest, royalty interest, production payment,
14 or other interest in any oil or gas produced in Colorado (interest owners)
15 as a percentage of gross income;

16 (e) Producers and first purchasers of oil and gas who disburse
17 funds to the interest owners are required to withhold one percent of the
18 amount owed to the interest owners to cover the severance tax. The
19 interest owner then claims a credit for the amount withheld on the interest

1 owner's annual tax return, either paying or obtaining a refund of the
2 difference.

3 (f) In a January 2020 audit report, the office of the state auditor
4 noted that this structure significantly increases the number of taxpayers
5 required to make a return and makes it difficult for the Colorado
6 department of revenue to determine whether all taxpayers have filed
7 required returns if producers and first purchasers do not provide complete
8 and accurate information;

9 (g) Current law allows a credit against the severance tax on oil
10 and gas equal to 87.5% of all ad valorem taxes paid to local governments
11 and special districts on oil and gas leaseholds and lands, except those
12 imposed on equipment and facilities used for production, transportation,
13 and storage and those paid on stripper wells (ad valorem credit);

14 (h) Because ad valorem taxes are paid on the prior year's
15 production, the mill levy for the taxes lags production by a full year. In
16 addition, for cash basis taxpayers, the credit is only claimed once the ad
17 valorem taxes are paid, creating an additional lag.

18 (i) The lag between production, assessment, and payment of ad
19 valorem taxes and the claiming of the ad valorem credit poses several
20 challenges to the administration of the severance tax. Because production
21 from oil and gas wells often declines rapidly after the first few years,
22 taxpayers may not be able to claim the full value of the credit. In addition,
23 the lag contributes to year-over-year volatility in state severance tax
24 revenue.

25 (j) The revenues from the state severance tax are divided between
26 the department of natural resources (DNR) and the department of local
27 affairs (DOLA);

1 (k) The money allocated to DNR is deposited into the severance
2 tax trust fund, where it is held in trust as a replacement for the depleted
3 natural resource, for development and conservation of the state's water
4 resources, and for use in funding programs that promote sound natural
5 resource planning. Money in the fund is then distributed to two other
6 funds and used to support various programs generally administered by
7 DNR and the Colorado water conservation board.

8 (l) The money allocated to DOLA is credited to the local
9 government severance tax fund and distributed to local governments, and
10 70% of the money is distributed through grants and 30% is distributed
11 through a direct distribution formula;

12 (m) There is significant year-over-year volatility in severance tax
13 revenues and the amount of money that is distributed each year to state
14 programs and local governments through these funds;

15 (n) This volatility cannot be attributed solely to fluctuations in
16 commodity prices and appears to be exacerbated by the structure of the
17 ad valorem credit as well as the withholding and payment structure for the
18 tax;

19 (o) The volatility in severance tax revenues creates challenges for
20 the state programs and local governments receiving those revenues;

21 (p) In 2021, the general assembly enacted Senate Bill 21-281,
22 which convened a severance tax working group to evaluate the severance
23 tax and make recommendations related to its structure and administration;

24 (q) Among other recommendations, the working group
25 recommended changing the legal incidence of the oil and gas severance
26 tax to be imposed on operators instead of interest owners. This
27 recommendation responds to the concerns raised by the office of the state

1 auditor by improving efficiency and allowing better administration and
2 enforcement of the tax. With adequate planning for implementation,
3 changing the legal incidence of the tax while making any necessary
4 adjustments to the tax rates and payment structures could ease the
5 administration and enforcement of the tax while maintaining revenue
6 neutrality.

7 (r) The working group also recommended changing the
8 calculation of the ad valorem credit to be based on an estimated amount
9 for the ad valorem taxes using the prior year's mill levy applied to the
10 current year's gross income. The working group proposed that taxpayers
11 calculate their credit by applying the prior year's mill levy to their current
12 year's income multiplied by the assessment rate of 87.5%, which is a
13 percentage used to determine the valuation of the oil and gas leaseholds
14 and lands for purposes of the property tax, and claiming 87.5% of that
15 amount for the credit. This change would eliminate the lag between the
16 taxes being assessed or paid and the credit being claimed, and reduce the
17 associated volatility in the severance tax revenue, without affecting state
18 revenue overall.

19 (s) Reducing volatility and easing the administration of the state
20 severance tax are important goals that must be addressed.

21 (2) The general assembly further finds and declares that:

22 (a) Its purpose in changing the calculation of the ad valorem credit
23 allowed against the state severance tax on oil and gas is to reduce
24 volatility in severance tax revenues and to improve the administration of
25 the state severance tax while maintaining revenue neutrality to the
26 greatest extent possible; and

27 (b) Additional planning is necessary to implement the working

1 group's recommendation to change the legal incidence of the tax in a
2 manner that will improve the administration and enforcement of the state
3 severance tax for taxpayers and the state.

4 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 39-29-105, **amend**
5 (2)(b); and **add** (2)(c) as follows:

6 **39-29-105. Tax on severance of oil and gas.** (2) (b) With respect
7 to oil and gas, there shall be allowed, as a credit against the tax computed
8 in accordance with the provisions of ~~paragraph (b) of subsection (1)~~
9 SUBSECTION (1)(b) of this section for each taxable year commencing on
10 or after January 1, 2000, BUT PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 2024, an amount equal
11 to eighty-seven and one-half percent of all ad valorem taxes assessed
12 during the taxable year in the case of accrual basis taxpayers or paid
13 during the taxable year in the case of cash basis taxpayers upon oil and
14 gas leaseholds and leasehold interests and oil and gas royalties and royalty
15 interests for state, county, municipal, school district, and special district
16 purposes, except such ad valorem taxes assessed or paid for such
17 purposes upon equipment and facilities used in the drilling for, production
18 of, storage of, and pipeline transportation of oil and gas. However, no
19 credit shall be allowed for ad valorem taxes paid or assessed on oil and
20 gas production that is exempt from the state severance tax pursuant to
21 subsection (1) of this section.

22 (c) FOR A TAXABLE YEAR BEGINNING ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1,
23 2024, FOR EACH WELL THAT IS NOT EXEMPT FROM THE STATE SEVERANCE
24 TAX PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION, THERE IS
25 ALLOWED A CREDIT AGAINST THE TAX COMPUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH
26 THE PROVISIONS OF SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION IN AN AMOUNT
27 CALCULATED BY THE FORMULA $C = 0.7656 \times GI \times ML$, WHERE:

- 1 (I) C IS THE AMOUNT OF THE CREDIT;
- 2 (II) GI IS THE GROSS INCOME ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE WELL FOR THE
- 3 CURRENT TAXABLE YEAR; AND
- 4 (III) ML IS THE TOTAL OF ALL MILL LEVIES, FIXED NOT LATER THAN
- 5 DECEMBER 22 OF THE PRECEDING CALENDAR YEAR PURSUANT TO SECTION
- 6 39-1-111, BY ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR PROPERTY AT THE WELL'S
- 7 LOCATION.

8 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 39-29-108, **add** (7)

9 as follows:

10 **39-29-108. Allocation of severance tax revenues - definitions**

11 **- repeal.** (7) (a) THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING AND

12 BUDGETING AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF

13 REVENUE, NATURAL RESOURCES, EDUCATION, AND LOCAL AFFAIRS, OR

14 THEIR DESIGNEES, SHALL, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE STAKEHOLDER

15 GROUP CONVENED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (7)(b) OF THIS SECTION,

16 DEVELOP AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN WITH RECOMMENDATIONS TO:

17 (I) CHANGE THE LEGAL INCIDENCE OF THE STATE SEVERANCE TAX

18 ON OIL AND GAS FROM INTEREST OWNERS TO OPERATORS. AT A MINIMUM,

19 THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MUST MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED

20 TO:

21 (A) THE LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE STEPS NECESSARY TO

22 IMPLEMENT THE CHANGE;

23 (B) ANY CHANGES TO THE TAX RATE AND STRUCTURE THAT ARE

24 NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE SHIFT IN LEGAL INCIDENCE IN A MANNER

25 THAT IS REVENUE NEUTRAL TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE; AND

26 (C) ANY OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE DISRUPTION TO

27 THE STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND STAKEHOLDERS DURING AND

1 AFTER THE TRANSITION;

2 (II) REQUIRE ELECTRONIC FILING OF RETURNS FOR SEVERANCE
3 TAXES; AND

4 (III) REQUIRE ADDITIONAL ELECTRONIC DATA COLLECTION
5 NECESSARY TO EASE THE ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE
6 STATE SEVERANCE TAX ON OIL AND GAS, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF
7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED DATA SHARING AMONG STATE AND LOCAL
8 GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

9 (b) THE PERSONS IDENTIFIED IN SUBSECTION (7)(a) OF THIS
10 SECTION SHALL ESTABLISH A STAKEHOLDER GROUP, CONSISTING OF
11 AFFECTED INDUSTRIES AND PARTIES, INCLUDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT
12 REPRESENTATIVES, TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
13 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

14 (c) THE PERSONS IDENTIFIED IN SUBSECTION (7)(a) OF THIS
15 SECTION SHALL SUBMIT THE WRITTEN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TO THE
16 JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE NO LATER THAN JANUARY 15, 2024. PRIOR TO
17 SUBMISSION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP
18 SHALL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS
19 AND INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDERS MAY PROVIDE COMMENTS IN RESPONSE
20 TO THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TO BE INCLUDED WITH THE SUBMISSION OF
21 THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

22 (d) THIS SUBSECTION (7) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024.

23 **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
24 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
25 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
26 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
27 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this

1 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
2 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
3 November 2022 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
4 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.