

INTRODUCTION

*Stephen F. Gates**

ConocoPhillips is pleased to have the opportunity to sponsor this inaugural International Energy Issue of the *Houston Journal of International Law* (the “*Journal*”). I am delighted to be involved in the development of this significant undertaking.

ConocoPhillips has a history of sponsoring issues of the *Journal*, beginning with Volume 15, Number 2 in the Winter/Spring of 1993, which was devoted in its entirety to the “Symposium on the Russian Petroleum Legislation Project at the University of Houston Law Center.” More recently, we sponsored Volume 27, Number 1 in the Fall of 2004. James W. Skelton, Jr., Senior Counsel at ConocoPhillips, has for many years lent his broad experience in international law to the *Journal* as a member, and current Chair, of the Advisory Board.

The lead article in this inaugural International Energy Issue is an intriguing one that presents a comprehensive survey of the legal framework of the international unitization of oil and gas fields. This excellent article, entitled “Unitizing Oil and Gas Fields Around the World: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Private Contracts,” was written by Jacqueline Lang Weaver and David F. Asmus, both of whom are experts in the field. This article is part of a larger study sponsored by the Association of International Petroleum Negotiators (AIPN). The members of the *Journal’s* Editorial Board and Advisory Board worked diligently to obtain the agreement of the AIPN to share the right to publish the article on unitization in this issue.

By making the decision to devote one issue each year to topics in the international energy arena, the *Journal* has opened the door to a dynamic area of law and commerce. By focusing on international energy matters and giving comprehensive treatment to related topics, the *Journal* will have within its

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grasp the leading role in energy matters among international legal periodicals. The legal community in Houston and around the world will be the direct beneficiaries of these efforts.

I expect that the International Energy Issue will earn a reputation as, and be widely recognized as, an essential tool in the field of international law. More importantly, I anticipate that it will contribute in an important way to the understanding and appreciation of the opinions and ideas regarding the international energy topics to which it will be annually dedicated.