

Time to choose between taxes and giveaways

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I'm writing to support and second the comments on Wednesday's editorial page by Rich Seifert, a longtime friend of mine from Fairbanks. For several months now I have been stumped by the reasons cited by the Republican leadership in Alaska's Senate to justify their refusal to deal responsibly with the state's budget crisis.

In particular, it is offensive to me that the Republicans keep referring to their intent to cure the problems of the people who have to work for a living, either in business or government, as the reason why the Senate is doing what they do this session. For example, they want to continue the massive giveaways to the oil industry, and make the state pay for them by forcing major cutbacks on the money that pays for state jobs and contracts - particularly in education and health care - and by cutting the PFD where the economic pain among Alaskans will be worst in Alaska's Bush, and the adverse — and expensive — social affects in Alaska's urban areas will be worst among the urban poor, the homeless, and the unemployed.

Most Alaskans understand that the problems of people who work for wages and salaries don't rank very high in Republican political philosophy, so what philosophy are they following in their absolute hostility against the fairest and most effective tax of all on people who work for pay: a progressive income tax.

Anybody who works for a living will almost certainly choose to have a job, even with an income tax, than no job at all. Loss of jobs will be the result of the Senate's "slash and burn" cuts to the money that pays for regular jobs in schools, state agencies, and community services like police protection. The further result of these job losses among public agencies will be that there will be a lot less money in the community available to the private businesses, contractors, and entrepreneurs who routinely sell essential goods and services to families and state agencies who, suddenly, will no longer have jobs and money to pay for them.

So, my question to the Alaska Senate continues to be: "Why the extreme hostility to an income tax that keeps money for jobs and businesses in Alaska; and why the extreme support for deep cuts in the annual PFD payments to help pay for continued annual payments to the oil industry when most of the money paid out of Alaska's public treasury to the oil industry will probably leave Alaska?"

We need answers on this. Who in the Legislature will provide those answers before they adjourn this session?