

Symposium Against Income Taxes

Description

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income tax and spending

Imagine what might happen if every elected official attempted to inform constituents of the most significant current issues being addressed by policy makers.

What if said elected officials provided expert overviews with suggested options for solving problems? Would Alaskans arrive at better results without the default political position of throwing more money at problems?

THAT would be novel.

Well, that is exactly what Eagle River **Rep. Lora Reinbold** and other community leaders did on Tuesday, October 24 at an event held in the auditorium of the Anchorage Museum at Rasmussen Center. Each presentation lasted 10 minutes, and each examined how money is being spent by the State of Alaska. After the presentations, audience members asked questions and heard measured responses.

Before the event, I was afraid this might be **Death by PowerPoint**. I was wrong.

The event, titled *EXPOSING BIG GOVERNMENT S*

***PENDING \$\$\$; Why Alaska Does Not Need income/labor taxes!* was put on by volunteers.**

A key sponsor, Americans for Prosperity, paid for the hall and copies of hand-outs for participants. This wasn't a "constituent meeting" in the traditional sense because it was open to anyone and was held outside of the district.

One argument for having Public Education provided by the government has always been that informed voters make better choices. So most politicians inform voters of their districts through advertising campaigns targeting high concern issues. Once elected they know constituents must actively dig to find out what was really voted for or against. Ultimately the progress of legislation, from introduction to signature by the governor, provides plenty of excuses for what cudda-wudda-shudda happened.

This was a different approach.

This event began with a discussion by **Ric Davidge** of the Department of Administration. A seasoned professional manager, he has worked for many local, state and federal agencies. His matter of fact presentation provided insights into how government works. He also provided nuggets from his vast experience. Davidge concluded with 12 concise bullet points for cost-savings in this department. Since 2006 the budget of this department has ballooned by 168 percent.

Terrence Shanigan's presentation entitled "The Thin Blue Line" highlighted inefficient practices in the Department of Public Safety. He pointed out that being a great State Trooper doesn't guarantee that a person will be a good manager. With nine divisions in DPS, most people only know of the two most visible—Troopers and Wildlife Enforcement. Five specific recommendations for cost savings were highlighted. During the same 2006-2016 decade DPS has experienced a 46 percent budget increase.

Rep. Reinbold next spoke about "Dangers Lurking in SB 91," the bill she fought against, which was one of two reasons why legislators were called back to Juneau by Gov. Bill Walker for Special Session.

Reinbold documented the sentencing ranges reduced by one-to-two years for Class A and Class B felonies in this new law. Prior to SB 91 a person with no previous convictions could receive up to two years in jail for a Class C Felony. Since passage of this bill, a person cannot receive jail time, only probation for such crimes. Reduced sentencing has also been set for Sex Offenders, Failure to Appear, and Dealing Opiates offenses. The OTHER reason Legislators were called back to Juneau:

To consider an Income Tax on Alaskans who work.

Medicaid and the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services are "Alaska's Budget Time-Bomb" according to **Liz Vasquez**, a former legislator, Alaska Assistant Attorney General, prosecutor and Administrative Law Judge. She explained that Medicaid was first signed into law in 1965 to provide health coverage for low-income people. Spending in this area has DOUBLED in only state funds this past year, from \$651 million (fiscal year 2016) to \$1.3 Billion (fiscal year 2017). Serious potential for fraud exists in this program due to payment error rates documented to be as high as 19 percent. Rep. Vasquez listed five specific suggestions to save money.

Does Alaska have a spending problem? Dr. Jason Rampton began on a whim to independently examine Alaska's per capita spending.

He was shocked at what he saw when compared to other states. The average United States per capita spending is \$6,385.61. Alaska's spending, when matched with our population, comes to \$17,529.52. He asked: "Is this sustainable?" Makes you wonder: What will be the legacy of Alaskan spending during our time, from nonrenewable natural resource wealth, by future generations?

Perhaps the highlight of the evening was a presentation by local talk radio personality **Rick Rydell**. He asked what Alaska's most dangerous creature might be; Moose, bear, wolverine? No, **Alaska's most dangerous creature is the "Yettobe."** Detailing Alaska Boondoggles and the (Gasline) Pipe Dream, Rydell reviewed Alaska's failed efforts and provided financial information any prudent investor would use to consider the cost and value of a proposed natural gas pipeline. Suffice it to say, from information provided Gov. Walker's pipe dream doesn't make economic sense.

This was a hard act to follow, but after a short break, this writer presented on the topic of DEED-No More Excuses-How to get Alaska's Education Back on Track.

As a product of Alaska Public Education myself, and a teacher, I have witnessed the academic decline of our education system first-hand. I expressed my regret that when we might have made choices to promote excellence, we have instead thrown money at a system in decline. Is this what every Alaskan would want for their kid's education if they were given the allotted \$18,000 provided by the state directly? Total state spending for education in the fiscal year 2006 was \$498,188,800 and by the fiscal year 2016 it rose to \$1,366,591,100—a 270 percent increase!

The University of Alaska, with three separate and independent government enterprises, was examined in a presentation by **Carol Sampson**, as being overly bureaucratic and concerned with real estate accumulation while enrollment declines. Established at statehood as a land grant college, the UA system might better serve Alaskans by living within its means and marketing its abundant land grant for sustainability, according to this speaker.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game represents Alaskan's "other PFD" if it is managed properly, according to Mike Keifer.

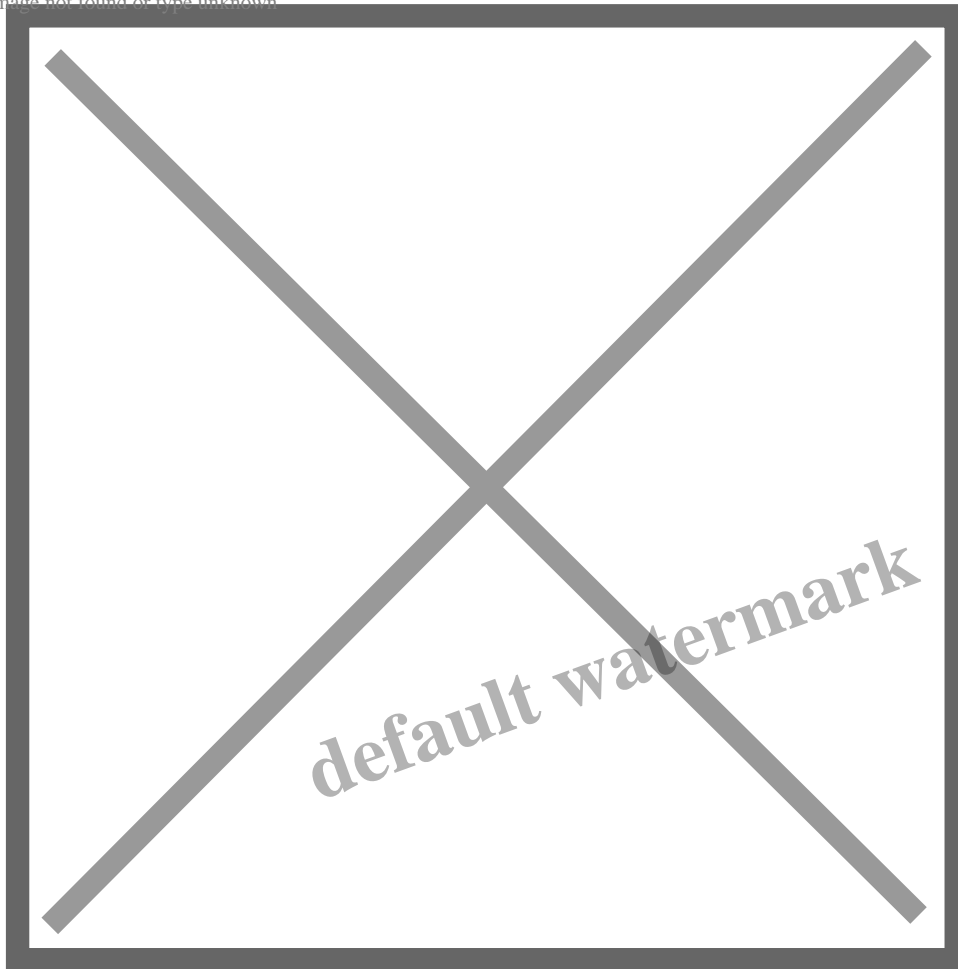
That department has experienced a 25 percent increase in budget since 2006, and yet inefficiencies exist.

Corinne Rollman, a local accountant in private practice, provided enlightenment on the Division of Legislative Finance, Office of Management and Budget (OMB). She identified budget realities from a common sense perspective. In 2006 Alaska had \$4.2 Billion in Revenue and \$10.2 Billion in Expenditures, leaving a deficit of \$6.04 Billion. In the fiscal year 2016, Alaska's operating budget was \$11,563,973.20 while State income is inching up.

www.omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/16_budget/16enacted_statewidetotals_6-30-15.pdf

Plenty of professional economists are saying our state spending is not sustainable in the face of declining oil production revenues. This symposium reinforced that reality. Some 100 people attended to explore the problem. As an educator myself, I appreciate this approach to helping voters know what our elected officials don't tell us.

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Lora Reinbold

From the informatiave 3 hour presentation—here is about one hour of the most important highlights from Expose Big Gov \$\$\$ Spending & a Call to Action at the end of the video which is very important! You can find the slides on Oct 24 on my Representative Lora Reinbold page on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/283917281734146/videos/1460822587376937/>

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