

Judy Crondahl
Juneau

I don't know if any of you remember Curt Menard. He was a one-armed dentist from Wasilla. Nice guy. About 30 years ago he was serving his first term in the House as a Republican. He did not have a prosthetic hand. He usually just wore a hook but to function as a dentist, he probably had a variety of tools. On the day the budget was being debated on the House floor, Representative Menard, being a good team player, stood up and waving, not his hook but a meat cleaver, proclaimed, "Mr. Speaker, I have come prepared to cut the budget." Speaker Grussendorf responded, "Representative Menard, should you need to go to the bathroom, please be very, very careful." Representative Menard had a ready response. "Mr. Speaker, I have found you can cut a little here and you can cut a little there, and there is still plenty left."

After that session, Representative Menard filed for re-election. Apparently he didn't like the team he was on because he filed 10 minutes before the deadline ... as a Democrat. He won.

That's one way to lose a team member. We found several others last year. Legislators were challenged during the primary and lost. Legislators lost in the General Election because their constituents decided they didn't like their team. And during House organization, legislators, for whatever reason, switched teams, and the Republicans lost the House. Now we are finally having a real debate on how to solve our budget problems.

Today the discussion is on tax credits for the oil industry or, how the legislature is putting the state into billions of dollars of debt to the world's wealthiest industry without a vote of the people. Is that even constitutional?

Of course, it's hard to think about the debt being incurred without thinking about the cuts to state services needed to pay for that debt. Apparently Representative Menard was correct. You can cut a little here and there and no one will notice. We got beyond that point last year because a lot of people noticed. This year even more are noticing. Closing Pioneers Homes, schools, health centers, public safety outposts? Will the Senate notice this year that their constituents are being seriously harmed or will we need to wait until next year's election for you to notice?

Thank you for your time and attention.