

HJR

81

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: _____ Agency Affected: Department of Revenue
Title: Budget Reserve Fund BRU: Treasury
Sponsor: Finklestein Components: _____
Requestor: House Judiciary

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
OPERATING						
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LANDS & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	0	0	0	0	0	0
CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
REVENUE	0	0	0	0	0	0

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: attach a separate page for analysis. Fiscal year 1990 effect is zero.

Prepared By: Milt Barker MB Phone: 465-2350
Division: Treasury Date: February 22, 1990

Approved by Commissioner: [Signature] Date: 2/22/90
Agency: Department of Revenue

Distribution (by preparer):
Legislative Finance
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Requestor
Office of Management and Budget
Impacted Agency(ies)



NEA-ALASKA

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

ANCHORAGE REGIONAL OFFICE

1411 W. 33RD AVENUE
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503
(907) 274-0536

JUNEAU OFFICE

105 MUNICIPAL WAY, SUITE 302
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
(907) 586-090

FAIRBANKS REGIONAL OFFICE

2118 CUSHMAN STREET
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701
(907) 456-4435

March 16, 1990

To: Representatives Goll and Gruenberg, Co-Chairs
Members, House Judiciary Committee

Re: Constitutional/Statutory Spending Limits

NEA-Alaska opposes any form of constitutional or statutory spending limit. Such a change would be far more than a limit on spending. It would be a limit on government and on your ability to represent your constituency and to act on their behalf and in their interests.

Tough spending decisions are never easy decisions but they must be made by our elected representatives based upon the circumstances which are current. They should not be based upon a formula driven system without regard for unique circumstances and needs.

A constitutional spending limit will have the effect of distorting subsequent spending decisions. Alaska is unique. Our problems, programs, and needs are truly different from other states. They are always dynamic.

It is predictable that they will be changing this session, next year, and in future years. As Legislators, you have a continuing need for maximum flexibility in how you chose to deal with them.

A state spending limit will do nothing more than pass along an increasing financial burden to local government. It will only serve to increase a disparity and inequity which is already glaringly evident.

In our opinion, the Alaskans who were involved in last years' "town meetings" were asking you and the Administration to have the courage to make the tough and responsible decisions on the level of programs and services which reflect our current needs and our current and projected financial resources. Such a process does not require any form of formula driven spending limit.

As Legislators you have the information, the responsibility, and the opportunity to make those spending decisions which are in the best interests of all of us. Please do so.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Manners
Executive Director

Don Oberg
President

MY TURN

Just say 'No' to a constitutional spending limit

By BILL POTTER

The Alaska Legislature is presently considering a constitutional spending limit. I think this is an ill-conceived idea and hope that fellow Alaskans will also oppose such a politically motivated way to avoid making the important decisions elected officials are supposed to make.

When the Founding Fathers gathered in Philadelphia to write our Constitution, the most significant comprehensive political document the world had ever seen or has yet to see, there were many present who did not have much trust in governments or government institutions. Yet in spite of this mistrust and even fear, of government run amok, they wrote a document that placed the ultimate control, the ultimate power, the power of the purse, in the hands of the people's elected representatives.

Without money, government cannot act; with money government can act. Those Founding Fathers placed the power to act, or not to act, in the hands of the people's representatives. And when a like number of another set of Founders met in Fairbanks to draft the Alaska Constitution, they recognized the wisdom of that earlier group which had met in Philadelphia, and acted likewise. They put the ultimate power, the power of the purse, in the hands of elected representatives. And that is as it should be.

A constitutional spending limit is more than a limit on spending; it is a limit on the power of government to act. It is a limit on the power of government to protect the people; it is a limit on the power of the government to serve the people; it is a limit on the power of the government to govern.

I suspect that many people who support a spending limit are concerned about the financial future of this state, and I think that is a just and righteous concern, but as bleak as the financial future of Alaska may be, it is not as bleak or as foreboding

as it has been in times past. Any review of the first eight years of this state government's financial history will show that the financial constraints were far more severe than even the most dire predictions for the future. In spite of the lack of financial resources during those early years, the state legislature, the people's representatives, were able to balance the needs of government with the financial resources available without a constitutional spending cap.

I believe we had many wise people in our legislature during those formative, financially pressing years, but I submit that the current legislature is equally wise and equally able to balance the needs of government with the finances available. I further submit that the people of Alaska will choose an equally wise legislature in the 1990 elections which will be equally able to balance the needs that exist with the finances that will be available, and subsequent elections will result in equally wise and able representatives of the people.

I don't believe it is good government policy or good public policy, for any legislature or any other body to second-guess the intelligence, judgment, or motives of future legislative representatives.

To deny future legislatures the opportunity to use their judgment to address the issues before them with the resources available at that time smacks of, if not arrogance, a profound lack of confidence in those legislators and/or the people who elected them.

I am concerned about the future of public schools because I have devoted my life to education in this state. I am concerned about the future we offer our children, and I am concerned about the economic and social status of the elderly, and I am concerned about those for whom circumstances have cast their lot outside the mainstream of our society. I have concerns for the future and what it is that may be done to restrict the ability of our legislature

to restrict the ability of government to act to deal with the issues and needs that arise within the confines of the resources available.

Notwithstanding what I said about the wisdom and ability of past, present, and future legislatures, I am painfully aware that not all legislators have been, or are likely to be, willing to make the judgments necessary to balance needs with the financial resources available. If there is a constitutional spending limit in place, I am concerned about legislators who will take the low road by saying "I wanted to help, but our hands were tied." "I wanted good schools, but there was a spending limit." "I support you in your desire to deal with alcohol and drug abuse, but there is nothing we can do with the constitutional limits placed on the legislature."

In the interests of good public policy; in the interests of good government, I urge you to resist any constitutional spending limits. I urge Alaskans to insist that elected officials demonstrate the courage to resist the temptation to tie the hands of government's ability to act in the public interest with the resources available.

Bill Potter has taught in Juneau for 25 years and is a member of the Education Commission of the States.

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