

Nov 2, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is David Beebe, I am testifying in support of the Draft Resolution 20-21 on behalf of myself, and perhaps many residents of Kake, Kupreanof and the Petersburg Borough who likely share the following concerns.

These concerns however, are best conveyed directly to Senator Stedman, but he has chosen so far to make himself unavailable to the general public. Many of us can understand, then, why the Senator might be unavailable.

As co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee, which holds the purse strings of government, Senator Stedman has a professional background in private financial management and a 17 year history in the state legislature. This makes him a very powerful elected official who is understandably unavailable regarding his role in our current state fiscal failure.

After all, one of the first rules in private financial management is, you never put all your eggs in one basket. But that is precisely what the Senator has advocated in regards to *public* financial management. 90% of state revenues were coming from a single source — oil and mining extraction. Absent a diversified, sustainable revenue stream which includes a state income tax — as the vast majority of other states employ — Alaska remains teetering on the cliff edge of failed state status.

So with problem causality established, I would like to return to the effects of the problem for which this resolution ably attempts to rectify.

The effects of the problem include an absence of government transparency. An absence of public process, and a clear overreach of power by the powerful co-chair Senator Bert Stedman.

After all, we are his constituency, and We the People are asking to be involved — to be informed — and to have a say in the expenditure \$40 million of public money during a fiscal crisis in the middle of a pandemic.

Instead, that public money was awarded in an open-ended, design as you see fit, no-bid contract with extremely little oversight — going to a multinational corporation home-based in Omaha Nebraska.

Literally hundreds of people are on public record in opposition to this process. They reside in the three directly-impacted communities and have already suffered years of draconian budget cuts. It is reasonable to ask “what is more important here?” A subsistence and recreation road to nowhere or adequate funding of public radio, public health, public safety, public education, and public transportation?

I urge the assembly for their yes vote to stand with the people, to stand for transparency in our government and to stand in defense of public process rather than allegiance to the Co-chair of the Senate Finance committee which holds the purse strings of government.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak