

# Editorial

## On the battle of the budget and being heard

The Republican majority in the legislature is not big on citizen involvement in government. They've garnered a well-deserved reputation for disdaining public hearings on important policy issues, as if their very election absolved them of any further responsibility for seeking direction.

They're fond of saying "We don't *feel* the public wants this, or that or the other," yet getting them to actually ask the public what they want is like pulling teeth. One wonders just where this *feeling* comes from, this psychic political intuition that sounds a lot like the product of too much time hanging around together behind closed doors. You'd think they were afraid of what they might hear if they did ask for some feedback.

(Not entirely without justification, some prominent state and national Democratic leaders can be faulted for governing by poll, but at least they take the public pulse).

It will be interesting to see how the Republicans respond to the testimony from the public on the state budget. We're at that point in the annual legislative script where they usually try to discredit testimony critical of their proposals by suggesting that "The special interest groups are at it again." As if the people who drag themselves away from their families and their kitchen tables to testify on things that matter dearly to them just don't count, or even exist. As if all of us, Republican lawmakers included, don't belong to a half dozen "special interest groups." As if Republicans had raced to write legislation to reform the influence-peddling, from which they have received considerable benefit.

We believe strongly that the soft landing approach of the Knowles Administration to dealing with the state's fiscal crisis, also embodied in the recommendations of the State's Long Range Fiscal Planning Commission, is the right course. It's socially responsible and fiscally sufficient. We hope the legislature will see its way clear to support it.