

Stevens: Cuts would really hit Alaska

by Alexandra J. McClanahan
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Alaska would be particularly hard hit if members of Congress were unable to pass the proposed national budget reduction package, according to Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska.

The situation in the state would be "almost unimaginable," Stevens said, because failure to pass the package would mean a 40 percent reduction in civilian operations.

The senator spoke to Alaska reporters last week in a teleconference from his Washington, D.C., office.

The proposed package calls for increased taxes on gasoline, cigarettes, beer, wine and luxury items, as well as \$40 billion in reduction in government spending in 1991. In addition, it would reduce benefits to farmers and Medicare recipients, as well as tax deductions for people who earn more than \$100,000.

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Failure by Congress to act would mean the Gramm-Rudman Act would take effect, requiring a \$100 billion cut in one year, Stevens said, noting that the deadline is this week.

Without the package, Alaska could face serious problems with airports, communications, health services for

rural Alaska and highways.

For example, Stevens said delays for travelers would be increased four-fold to six-fold if Gramm-Rudman went into effect because of the cuts in the Federal Aviation Administration.

And he added that the Anchorage International Airport would have to cut 40 percent of its flights.

Stevens said although the package has problems, it is better than the alternative. He compared it to drinking three quarts of warm mineral water or facing "absolute chaos."

Despite the proposed cuts, however,

Stevens said he is confident that the federal takeover of subsistence management on federal lands in Alaska will not be greatly harmed by the package.

The Department of the Interior is one of the few areas where concessions were made for slight growth, he said.

Stevens said \$13 million has been requested for the subsistence program for 1991, and he expects to get about \$10 million.

"With some belt tightening they can do it," he said.