



Finding funds for state's neediest

Things have changed a great deal in the short time since last summer when Gov. Steve Cowper drastically slashed a number of vital human resource programs.

There seems to be no quick end in sight to the situation in the Middle East, and oil prices continue to go up. While this turn of events has serious consequences for the entire world, in the short term it means the state of Alaska is facing a lot more revenue.

We can only hope that some of this "extra" money will be used to restore funds for the neediest members of our society.

We'd like to point out, however, that no matter how much money the state has, Cowper was dead wrong in what seems like a meat ax approach to cutting money for such basic things as Bean's Cafe.

A story in this week's issue talks about the fact that Anchorage's "sleep-off" center faces closure, which could surely spell death for people who have literally nowhere else to go.

Whenever people talk about budget cuts, people are going to scream that "their" program can't be cut. Cowper was under tremendous pressure when he made his decisions, and they had to be made quickly.

Sadly, whatever the excuse, the fact remains that Bean's and a lot of other programs serving Alaska's very poor are in trouble. In addition, a sleep-off center may be forced to close with no alternative site available.

It's hard for us to believe that with a state operating budget of more than \$2 billion, money for these essential — literally life-saving programs — was not available.

The time to act is now. Alaska really is facing a situation of having a lot more money. The people responsible for making decisions couldn't find the wherewithal to serve the poorest of the poor when the funds were tight. They ought to be able to find an answer now.

We urge people to contact their legislators. These programs must be saved. No state can allow its people to starve or to freeze to death. And surely, a state with so much money won't allow this to happen.