Bill would hurt rural air transport

Dear Editor,

The Legislature will soon decide whether or not to give away another $4 or $5 million dollars a year to big business. Why is the Legislature contemplating such a decision? Because the in-state oil refineries asked for a tax break of 3.2 cents for their big jet fuel customers, primarily FedEx. All other carriers will continue to pay the tax. The winner...Big Business.

The losers...the folks in rural Alaska. The 3.2 cent jet fuel tax compromises 25% of funds earmarked for rural airports. Those dollar provide snow plow drivers and grader operators on airport runways. If existing revenue dollars go away, replacement funds must be found—and history shows the DOT will surely increase user fees to the traveling public or cut essential services such as rural airport maintenance.

Rural Alaska will be the first to feel the impact if the legislature passes this bill.

Last year the Governor rightfully opposed the same bill. This year the Governor changed his mind after visiting Tennessee where FedEx (big jet fuel consumer) is headquartered and Mapco owns the only refinery. The Governor now supports a tax exemption for refineries and justifies the giveaway as "a jobs bill to expand Alaska's economy". Mapco claims the windfall "might" be an incentive to expand their facilities.

The Legislature went to Juneau to cut $60 million from the budget, not give away $4 or $5 million this year, and every year after. Do the refineries need another subsidy on a playing field that is already level?

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