

Expand the session

When the 1981 Legislature adjourned after a record-long session last month, it had failed to address the problem of what to do when the federal money stops coming in.

The Reagan administration-proposed cutbacks in federal spending were approved by Congress last week and their effects are sweeping in Alaska. They are also confusing, unknown and difficult to understand simply because there are so many state programs which had been funded by federal money.

The total picture of the federal budget cuts and how they effect the state may not be known for months. And once the total situation is known, the state will have to determine what to do.

One of the aspects of the federal cuts is that some money which had been given directly to social service programs will be funnelled into big "block grants" to be given to the various state governments to administer as the states see fit.

The state of Alaska is not prepared to administer such massive funding programs and simply doesn't know what effect the federal situation will have on Alaska.

Former House Speaker Jim Duncan knew this and proposed two bills which would have established and funded a study of the effects on the state.

Problem is, Duncan was unable to push his bills though the house while he was speaker and after he was deposed by a coalition of legislators who wanted a more powerful speaker, his bills were "killed and not revived," according to one legislator.

The Legislature also neglected to take up the matter of Gov. Jay Hammond's constitutional spending limit on state government and the governor has called the Legislature back into session July 13 to consider that matter.

This would be a good time to kill two birds with one stone. The state is going to have to face the fact that it will have to study the federal spending changes and cuts sooner or later. It would be advantageous to study that matter before the end of the federal fiscal year on Sept. 30 and certainly before the state Legislature reconvenes in 1982.

Now is the perfect time to take up that matter and Hammond can do it by his say-so.

He already has called the group back to consider frugality in state spending.

He also should have the group consider the matter of wisdom and foresightedness in state and federal spending.