

# What matters here

An interesting and revealing lesson was learned in Washington D.C. recently by Alaska's U.S. Senators and our scientific and military communities.

The lesson learned was something that many of us knew all along — that what matters most in the Reagan administration today is simply dollars and cents, not the quality of life, education or science.

The lesson was learned during hearings on Sen. Frank Murkowski's Arctic Research Policy bill which could create a commission to write a thoughtful, rational and coordinated policy for resources, research and development of the Alaskan Arctic.

Sen. Ted Stevens has thrown his considerable influence behind the bill and had the support of the State Department, the Coast Guard, the American scientific community as well as representatives of the North Slope of Alaska.

All agreed that not nearly enough is known about the Arctic regions of the country. All agreed that the Arctic contains important minerals, oil and other resources. All agreed that such a policy is necessary for the well-being of North Slope residents, for the nation's resources needs, and even for the military needs of a mineral-hungry Defense Department.

Well, it turns out that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) — the federal government's accountants — decided that we can't have such a crucial policy because it would cost money.

It is after all, OMB's duty to watch our federal spending and this position is at least in line with OMB's other outrageous budget decisions.

But, OMB overlooked one thing. The money wouldn't come from the federal coffers. It would come from those private companies which would directly benefit from development of the plentiful resources in the Arctic — the oil and mineral companies.

Moreover, OMB didn't decide to just oppose the policy. It tried to censor any department in the executive branch which supported the policy.

OMB directed the State Department and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration to *NOT TESTIFY*. The U.S. Coast Guard was allowed to testify but only on technical matters, and not to back the bill.

Sen. Stevens rightfully and indignantly refused to take testimony and fired off strong objections concerning the tactics of the OMB.

We must admit that we are not surprised by these tactics, but we are nonetheless appalled.

The government was established with a system of checks and balances to insure that no one area of government is able to run roughshod over another.

Thusly, the Legislative branch proposes legislation and passes laws. The administration can veto them but if there is enough support for that law, it will be passed after reconsideration by the Congress.

But in this case, Reagan's OMB accountants looked only at the bottom line that they wanted to see and they didn't really care how they got there.

Someone should give a civics lesson to the OMB accountants — or send them back to school and get other pencil pushers who have a little more interest in the rights of the country.