

Capitol Move

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It is interesting to sit back and watch the political games being played over what the real cost of the Capitol Move will be. One estimate is to 2 to 3 billion dollars or higher, another, \$521 million in state money, and the latest is \$109 million "bare bones, no frills" advanced by the State Department of Public Works. What is being lost in this whole charade being orchestrated before the Alaskan electorate is the basic lesson of how the system works. All of us in public life who compete for a share of the taxpayers' dollars know intimately how the system works. But somehow that knowledge has never been advanced to the citizens of Alaska in a way that would stir public debate.

Just to remind ourselves, let us go back to the lessons we all learned in high school civics: 1) Congress appropriates money to support our national interests; 2) those dollars are parcelled out to the 50 States, and other national and international interests after much debate and negotiations to determine our priorities; 3) roughly the same procedure is followed by the various state and local governments. All of this is necessary because there is a limit to the dollars available and a limit to what the taxpayer will tolerate.

Now if I were mayor of a newly created city in rural Alaska and I felt a responsibility to my constituency, I would do my best to convince the feds and the state that our situation was "unique" and that we were "underdeveloped" and that current levels of spending were "inadequate to meet the needs." And of course, I would back all this up with the appropriate statistics. I would show that adequate water-sewer systems are needed to meet the immediate needs and allow for future growth (EPA and PHS). Accessibility by all modes of travel should be swift and safe (State Dept. of Highways, FAA, U. S. Dept. of Transportation). Our children should have the best educations possible (HEW, State Dept. of Ed.). Housing should be adequate whether it be for clerk typists or commissioners (HUD, FMHA). Economic Development Planning should commence immediately to diversify the local economy in case some idiot decides to move the capitol again. (EDA, Commerce, Public Works). The list is endless, and with a little imagination could eventually include virtually every state and federal agency.

The point of all this is that we are creating another competitor for what are obviously limited resources. I don't think that we who represent rural Alaska can sit back and allow professional politicians to continue to try to pull the wool over our eyes with vague debates about cost. The real cost is unknown and permanent what we would have is someone else continually competing for dollars to meet needs we have not met ourselves. Let's get this discussion back on track and evaluate how the capitol move would touch each of us personally.