

# Editorial



## *Legislature's failure is tragic*

The tragic failure of the Alaska Legislature to act on a solution to the subsistence dilemma in the state right now could be a disaster for the Alaska Native community and the rest of the residents of the state as well.

When legislators failed to support a constitutional amendment to be offered to the voters in the fall, federal takeover of fish and game management on federal lands in Alaska on July 1 was assured. This failure was despite consensus within the Native community on a solution — consensus reached after much soul searching on the part of many different Native leaders with competing goals.

The failure also came despite a rallying of support for a subsistence solution by many different groups, such as loggers, the oil industry and commercial fishermen, to name a few.

Thanks to an Alaska Supreme Court ruling in December that the state's law giving preference to rural Alaskans for subsistence taking of fish and game is unconstitutional, the state is facing a chaotic situation.

With this subsistence issue we're talking about people's lives, people's very ability to survive. Can a minority's most basic need be ignored?

Unfortunately, it appears that some legislators, particularly urban people, answer this question affirmatively. It's also unfortunate that Gov. Steve Cowper was not able to find a way to work with these legislators and others to find an answer as the final minutes of the session ticked away.

At this point it would be futile to sit around and point fingers at those who could have solved this problem and yet failed to act.

Sadly, this is an issue that could literally tear Alaska in half, and it is our feeling that most people do not realize the seriousness of the situation and have no idea what a federal takeover means.

It takes leadership to see what lies ahead and to find answers.

All Alaskans need leadership right now. We need a strong governor who will help mold new initiatives to get Alaska back in the driver's seat *before July 1*.

We also need responsible legislators who will go back into special session and who will support a solution that will prevent a federal takeover.

We urge the governor and our legislators to heed this plea and take some action. We don't want to waste time blaming and castigating. We want a solution.