

This is not the time for 'easy' solutions to the state's problems

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Recently I wrote a check to the Oregon DMV for the registration of a personal vehicle.

I was reminded of the 50 percent increase in registration fees, along with over \$1.6 billion in new taxes and fees that were passed in the 2009 legislative session, yielding an all-funds budget increase of \$4.8 billion (9.3 percent increase), not the \$2 billion cut that others proclaim.

While citizens are making difficult decisions personally, I wondered what benefit they would receive from these increases.

In October, the Statesman Journal reported on the first of 10 furlough days for state employees. The report focused on how these closures impacted our dedicated state employees and hard-working citizens being served.

The article included a story about a citizen who traveled from Santiam Canyon to obtain a Commercial Driver's License so he could apply for a job. He found a closed sign on the door of the normally open DMV. Both locations in town were closed.

Being a practical and creative thinker, I thought, why didn't Salem have one of the two DMVs open, alternating weeks of closure? At least the citizens could be served. Why didn't we creatively schedule, as any normal business would, practically — reducing the necessary hours fairly of all staff so the establishment could remain open?

Ask your local grocery store if they would just close to "save" money or would they be creative to stay open, making sure their hard-working customers were able to purchase groceries to eat?

So I called the director of the DMV in search of the answers to my questions. He simply said it was out of his hands — a decision made above him. I asked the governor's office and was sent an e-mail explaining the "why," but was told what I believe to be the real problem, "(scheduling this way) makes managing the furlough days for 26,500 employees much easier." Wow! What if Safeway or Fred Meyer took this approach? They would be out of business in no time.

The customers (citizens and businesses) of Oregon are faced with difficult challenges. These tough times call for hard decisions and hard work by leadership. The front-line employees and managers of our state services have the professional ability to schedule

to the needs of our citizens. We need top level leadership that will allow them to do what is right for the citizens.

As we discuss the debate of taxes, I think the real question is: When will the leaders of our state realize this is not the time for "easy"?