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Tax policy is out of whack

Sep 23, 2017

Editor, Casa Grande Dispatch:

Let me begin by saying: I'm not writing to oppose the Pinal County new roads and freeways project. I'm not opposed to passage of Propositions 416 and 417. You've probably seen the full-color ad in your mailbox. I merely want to point out the fiscally irresponsible way Arizona's state government approaches tax policy.

Two weeks ago, my wife and I attended a Pinal Partnership breakfast promoting this vital infrastructure project. Speaker after speaker told us that the state will not be providing the required funding. The Republican Pinal County supervisors and party chair who spoke stressed that the project would be funded by a sales tax increase that would cost the average family only \$80 per year. What they failed to stress is that this regressive cost will be added to the already \$800 per year families are now paying in sales taxes.

The tax polices enacted by our current governor and one-party-dominated state Legislature continue a relentless drive to increase sales tax. Arizona now is in the top 25 percent of the highest sales taxes among all states — even Illinois is lower! Our state government has forced counties, cities and school districts to fend for themselves in paying for roads, bridges and schools. In fiscal 2016 alone, an increase of about \$64 million in costs was pushed onto county governments. We're seeing a reduced state budget balanced on the backs of working families and small businesses.

We've got to start looking for a better way forward. I suggest we start by auditing our nearly \$13 billion annual sales tax loophole monstrosity. Estimates show we could easily add \$1.5 to \$2 billion per year to our annual state budget — enough to fund infrastructure and education needs of today and tomorrow while reducing our staggering sales tax rates. This would be a boon for workers, families and small businesses across the state.

Ralph Atchue

Eloy

EDITOR'S NOTE: The writer is a Democratic candidate for state Senate in Legislative District 11.



VOTE

Road proposition to be debated in CG