

TUCSON OPINION

Ducey tries to circumvent will of the people on taxes



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The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer:

At Pima County Interfaith, we believe that a budget reflects an organization's values. We also believe in honoring the will of the people and the Arizona Constitution. That is why we are appealing to Arizona citizens today.

Our governor and state legislative leaders are trying to thwart the will of Arizonans by calling a special session to repeal and replace SB 1828, the flat tax law that would require everyone to pay state income tax at a rate of 2.5%.

What is the problem with this? First of all, the state's richest citizens would benefit greatly from the flat tax, while the less fortunate receive paltry benefits. For example, a taxpayer making \$50,000/year would save about \$39 annually in taxes, while a taxpayer making \$5 million would save more than \$46,000. Ask yourself who really benefits from this scheme?

In addition, this flat tax would eliminate \$2 billion from revenues to the

state. While the state is currently benefiting from federal pandemic stimulus and a strong economy, we know that the economy always slows. The federal money will end. The structural deficit created would harm all state services, including public education, public safety, housing, health care and prisons.

The people of Arizona saw through this tax cut as a benefit to the rich and a threat to children and themselves. In just 90 days last summer, we joined forces with people statewide to gather 215,000 signatures, almost 100,000 more than needed, to get a referendum on November's ballot.

The purpose of the referendum is to give voters the chance to approve or disapprove SB 1828. You probably signed the petition. You may have gathered signatures. We deserve to vote on it.

The Arizona Constitution guarantees the right of the people to refer laws passed by the Legislature to a vote by the people. If the Legislature repeals the flat tax law, our referendum will refer to a law that has ceased to exist. Voters cannot approve or disapprove a law that has been repealed. Critical to the point here, the governor wants a similar flat tax passed this year in a special session. For the people to vote on his new flat tax, we

would once again have 90 days to gather enough signatures to refer the new bill to the ballot.

What don't the governor and legislative leaders understand about last year's referendum? What don't they understand about people's rights under the Arizona Constitution? We believe they don't like what the people are saying to them.

We made the governor mad, and now he wants to craft an end run and deny our rights!

This insult to Arizonans cannot be allowed to stand. The people have spoken, and they want their say on this immoral tax cut. What can you do? We are not helpless; we can act!

1. Call your state legislators to advocate the people's right to a referendum on the flat tax. Ask them *not* to support repeal and replace.

2. Ask 10 friends to do the same. Share this information widely.

Let's flood our representatives with phone calls before the governor calls the special session. Let them know we are tired of the disrespect, and we demand to be heard.

Nancy Smith is a leader in Pima County Interfaith, a faith-based, nonpartisan nonprofit that does community organizing.