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**From:** Todd Palin [fek9wnr@yahoo.com]  
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State Of Dependency

By Kevin Drum

Nov 5, 2007

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(Political Animal) STATE OF DEPENDENCY....Hey, whatever happened to the Bridge to Nowhere? You remember: the \$229 million piece of pork that Senator Ted Stevens earmarked in 2005 for a bridge across the Tongass Narrows that was intended to link the town of Ketchikan (pop. 8,000) to its airport on Gravina Island.

Well, it got scrapped. A couple of months ago Alaska's new governor killed the project. But in the November issue of the *Monthly*, Alaskan journalist Charles Homans says there's much more to the story: To reduce the Bridge to Nowhere to a punch line, however, is to miss an important point. Life on the

Last Frontier is complicated and expensive, and you pay for it.

....Simply put, Alaska has made a habit of transferring its operating costs to the federal government. The state pulls out nearly two times as much money as it pitches in to the Treasury, a drain that looks especially bad in light of the state's fiscal reality. Today, Alaska enjoys a healthy budget surplus, and it sits on a Permanent Fund of more than \$39 billion. It also refuses to levy sales or income taxes on its citizens. In a state that fails to pull its weight, the Bridge to Nowhere is just an especially weighty example.

....In the late 1990s, people began to refer to a problem called the "Alaska Disconnect": the high expectations Alaskans continued to have of government even as they failed to pay in properly. This fiscal dissonance was abetted by Stevens's largesse, but ultimately it wasn't his fault. The problem had been triggered the moment Alaska struck it rich with oil. Psychologically, it had been cemented with the fateful 1980 decision to abolish the income tax. Read the whole thing to learn how Alaska turned into America's biggest basket case. And while you're at it,

take a trip down memory lane with "Alaska, GOP Welfare State," from our July/August 2005 issue. It's all about Ted Stevens, no-bid contracts, Alaskan tribal corporations, and federal loopholes big enough to drive a cruise ship through.

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