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At some point there will be no one to tax

Tuskegee News' correspondent Frank Dillman is somewhat of a "watchdog" when it comes to expenditures of taxpayers' money.

In his column this week, Dillman expresses his concern about the Macon County Commission seeking ways to increase its revenue to meet its financial obligations and provide services for the residents of Macon County.

Dillman does his research, especially when it comes to public officials traveling to various conventions, seminars and trips in general. Members of the Macon County Board of Education and the Macon County Commission have drawn his wrath. Dillman doesn't waver. He basically believes that most — if not all — travel for various training sessions doesn't require an entire board or commission to make the trip, especially with today's access to the internet that can save a lot of travel money.

Pointed out in Dillman's article is there are other governmental bodies — the State of Alabama and the federal government that are also going after our hard-earned dollars. Gov. Robert Bentley's proposed increases in taxes for utilities will certainly come home to roost by the big utilities passing on those increases to their customers. That's the way it works.

While Gov. Bentley won't get all that he is asking from the Republican supermajority in the Legislature, there will be some increases to what we pay to the State. At some point, the State's exemption for Social Security income will probably take a hit. The federal government already taxes Social Security Income, a tax that has already been paid by those who have reached the point in their lives to collect their Social Security.

Dillman talked about federal, state and county taxes. Since he lives in Notasulga and is retired, he didn't mention taxes in the Town of Notasulga.

He also didn't mention those who live or work in Tuskegee and purchase goods in the county seat. Tuskegee's 3 percent occupational tax is the highest in the state. So is the 10 cents on the dollar sales tax. Local residents had no say when the occupational tax went from 1 percent to 2 percent, then 3 percent. The City Council made that decision, just as it did about the hike in the sales tax.

Their logic was that the city needs money to operate. So do individual households, but they can't just increase taxes. They have to pay their bills based on what their income is. The federal government just increases its debt limit. That doesn't work at this level.

Tuskegee is a member of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA), which provides electricity to Tuskegee and about a dozen other municipalities in the State. Tuskegee's rates are comparable to our neighboring communities, but many in Tuskegee pay much more for their power because they live in older homes that aren't as energy efficient as some in other areas.

If the tax on the big utilities increases, it will trickle down to those who pay for services in Tuskegee.

The problem for Tuskegee and Macon County is that the population is decreasing at the highest rate of any county in Alabama. But that's a topic for another day. More taxes may generate some additional revenue, but long term those who are being taxed may decide to go elsewhere, pay less in taxes and get better services. That's the quandary we face.

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