

Jan 17, 2007

## Leasing turnpike not the way to go in Pa. ✓

Editor, New Era:

Many years ago, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania built a road across the state. They called this a turnpike and started to collect tolls. Apparently, it brought in enough money to keep it maintained, and they even rebuilt in the last few years. Now, the throne in Harrisburg wants more money for general expenditure for the state's transportation system. They want to lease the road to a private company.

As I see it, the commonwealth will get a large amount of money up front, but not much in the future. The private company must make enough money to pay the commonwealth and also make a profit. The only way for that to happen is to raise tolls or neglect maintenance. This would create an outcry from the users. But that would be OK. The state would say, "We have no control over that. Complain to the private company."

Now the commonwealth wants to turn I-80 into a toll road. This would bring in "much needed money," the state says. I see several problems.

The federal government built I-80, Pennsylvania did not. When the interstate system was built, if it used an existing toll road for a portion of it, that portion could remain a toll road. No new construction was to be a toll. The federal government pays the commonwealth X-amount of money each year to maintain the road. If Pennsylvania does not own the road, how can it begin charging tolls? If Pennsylvania starts charging tolls, will the federal government stop paying for the maintenance? If the commonwealth needs to actually own the road in order to collect tolls, and the federal government now "owns" it, what will the commonwealth do?

Maybe they can take it by eminent domain! That seems to be popular these days with governing bodies.

Now, wouldn't that sit well in Washington, D.C.!

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