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**To:** 'bhilyer@khn1.com'  
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**Sent:** 11/6/2006 7:57:59 PM  
**Subject:** djou

Aloha Beth:

The excise tax surcharge that goes into effect on January 1 is **not** the largest tax increase in Hawaii's history, despite Charles Djou's claim in your Sunday story.

The tax is going up one-half (0.5) percentage point, a 12.5 percent increase. In 1963, the Legislature raised the excise tax from 3 to 4 percent. That's one full percentage point, a 33.3 percent increase. Either way, that one was larger than the increase that takes effect on January 1.

And, as we pointed out in a letter to the editor of the Star-Bulletin on Friday, the costs of developing rail are \$3.6 billion for the 20-mile route between East Kapolei and Ala Moana or \$4.6 billion for the full 28 miles from West Kapolei to UH-Manoa.

Djou is lumping in the \$600 million in bus replacement costs that would be needed because it strengthens his argument. What he doesn't say is that buses will have to be replaced no matter which of the four alternatives is chosen. In the case of the no-build and transportation system management options, bus costs would be even greater than \$600 million. Bus replacement costs actually come out of a different federal fund, by law. Djou doesn't mention that because it undermines his no-rail position.

I know how convenient it is for the media to lap up Djou's pronouncements on a slow Sunday. He figured that out a long time ago. But good journalism requires a reporter to exercise some scrutiny of the message, especially when it's so clearly partisan, and to do some independent fact-checking. Otherwise, you ought to attribute claims like "largest tax increase..." to the person who's making them.

At least you could have given us a chance to respond. As you know, Bill Brennan and I are reachable by phone, even on weekends.

--Mark Matsunaga