At the start of the year, I submitted a proposal to eliminate the new highway use tax (HUT) on heavyweight trucks, a proposal many Republicans figured warranted discussion given the financial pressure faced by so many residents and businesses who found Connecticut an expensive place to live long *before* inflation became a household word.

Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues didn’t see things the same way. What ensued underscores a philosophical difference between Republicans and our friends across the aisle that will, ultimately, manifest itself in the two-year state budget that will be adopted in late spring.

Passed by Democrats in 2021, the HUT is levied according to a truck’s weight, classification and number of miles traveled in Connecticut. Targeted truckers are required to obtain a permit to remit payments to the state, and it’s expected to generate $90 million in annual revenue. Our majority party colleagues want to use that money to unlock federal transportation spending that requires the state—in this case the trucking industry—to pony up some money.

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to understand the far-reaching, trickle-down impact of this tax.

And naturally, you—the consumer—is at the end of the tailpipe. Expect to pay more for everyday services and goods such as groceries.

Democrats control all the legislature’s committees, and the co-chairmen of the Finance panel refused to hold a public hearing on our bill to eliminate the tax. That decision would have denied those concerned about the tax an opportunity to tell legislators how much it is expected to cost them. The first payment from truckers to the state was Feb. 28.

Republicans were forced to petition our colleagues—we had to collect 51 signatures—for a public hearing on our bill to eliminate HUT. I’ll share specifics when it’s scheduled, including how you can add your voice to the discussion about how this tax impacts our cost of living here.

With a few terms of legislative service under my belt, it’s become clear to me that eliminating a tax is antithetical to the Democrat experience at the capitol.

In the case of their truck tax, eliminating it would be an admission that our state’s Special Transportation Fund (STF) has been mismanaged for years—that they’ve created this new revenue stream because decisions to shift DOT and DMV operating costs into that key fund has crimped the state’s ability to borrow and pay back money for transportation projects.

But now, with a heaving Budget Reserve Fund and a STF expected to top $620 million this summer, Connecticut has options. Using some of that money to unlock federal transportation funds, rather than a truck tax, should be among them. Tax relief, too.

Considering that Democrats made Republicans launch a petition drive to simply hold a public hearing, I’m growing increasingly skeptical that we’ll see anything other than the status quo.

I expect that even Gov. Lamont will face pushback from his party on his proposals for tax relief, with increasingly influential Progressives showing more interest in a statewide property tax than restoring a key tax credit that would put wind in the sails of small businesses.

Republican proposals to index state income tax brackets to inflation so personal income doesn’t lose value, or eliminating the 1 percent meals tax?

I suspect those will be about as popular with our majority party colleagues as our petition was.