

Professional dentists don't serve those in rural areas who need care  
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*Letters to the Editor*

I sat by and fumed when I heard on the news that the dentists and dental associations in Alaska were opposed to the dental health aides trained and hired by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to provide dental care in the underserved areas of our state. Then I was irked to see them take out big ads in the paper to make their case. Now they are suing the dental health aides and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and I can't stand by any longer ("Groups sue to stop rural dental aides," Feb. 1).

In my work in recent years, I have become acutely aware of the terrible dental problems in rural communities and the lack of professional dental care. I have seen professionals and communities struggle to find an answer. A model was found that has been successful in the progressive country of New Zealand, and it has been working well. Apparently so well that it is upsetting to the professional dentists in Alaska. But I tell you that the only reason the rural communities have had to resort to this type of care is because the professional dentists do not serve those in need. They are some of the wealthiest of all Alaskans, and I abhor that they stand by and oppose a service that they are not willing to provide. Take what they say with a big grain of salt.

---- Beverly Churchill

Anchorage