



Washington State  
School Directors' Association

## Legislative Update

April 9, 2015

By [Deb Merle](#)

### **Budgets and more budgets**

Both chambers passed their operating budgets this week – one the easy way, and one the hard way. The House budget (HB 1106) passed quickly and along straight party lines (51-47). The Senate spent a couple of long days and an all-nighter debating dozens of amendments (two passed). In the end, their budget (SB 5507) passed 27-22 with Democrat Senators Mark Mullet and Tim Sheldon joining 25 Republicans in the majority.

The Senate passed its transportation budget (ESSB 5988) last month and will amend the House's capital budget (SHB 1115) this week. The House passed a capital budget last week and a transportation budget (SHB 1299) this week. So, all budgets are out now.

See the WSSDA [Budget Watch List](#) and the WSSDA [Bill Watch List](#) for comparative summaries of the K-12 portions of the operating and capital budget proposals.

### **I-1351 Watch**

Both the House and Senate budgets fund K-3 class sizes of 17 students. Both budgets also assume major changes to other parts of I-1351, cutting the cost of implementation by billions of dollars. The amendments to the initiative proposed by each house are similar; the method of making the changes differs, offering the two viable options.

### ***Senate Bill 6088***

The Senate would send a referendum to the people in November to amend the initiative. If it passed, most of the class size reductions and staffing levels established in I-1351 would return to pre-initiative levels. If it failed, the legislature would have to come back into session to amend the state budget to fund what is currently called for in I-1351.

The referendum, outlined in SB 6088, would maintain K-3 classes of 17, but restore the rest of the class size reductions called for in I-1351 to pre-initiative levels. It would also eliminate the provision allowing schools to use class size reduction funding for additional personnel if physical capacity prevents smaller classes. SB 6088 also restores non-instructional staffing to pre-initiative levels, except for family involvement coordinators and guidance counselors. The referendum would include increased funding for LAP, Transitional Bilingual and Highly Capable programs as well. SB 6088 needs a simple majority to pass the legislature.

### ***House Bill 2222***

The House proposes to make changes to I-1351 by mustering a two-thirds majority as required by law for the legislature to amend an initiative during the first two years. (After two years they can amend it with a simple majority.)

Like SB 6088, HB 2222 maintains the 17:1 student-teacher ratio in K–3 and rolls back class sizes in other grades to pre-initiative levels. Like the Senate referendum, HB 2222 also restores non-instructional staff to pre-initiative levels except for family involvement coordinators and guidance counselors. Both the House and Senate bills include funding for LAP and Transitional Bilingual, but HB 2222 does not include funding for the Highly Capable program.

HB 2222 differs from SB 6088 by maintaining the provision allowing for extra staff in classrooms if physical capacity impedes the ability to reduce K-3 classes to 17. And, the House bill adds a provision that was not part of I-1351 - making educator COLA and health benefits part of basic education.

See the WSSDA [Bill Watch List](#) for bills we're tracking.

Have fun next week!

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