



Washington State
School Directors' Association

Legislative Update

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By [Marie Sullivan](#), WSSDA Director of Governmental Relations

Senate Republicans announce “coalition majority”

Two Democrats have joined all 23 Senate Republicans to create a “Majority Coalition Caucus” for the 2013 legislative session. The 25 state senators signed a [set of principles](#) to guide the work of the new caucus.

Sen. Rodney Tom, D-Bellevue, and Sen. Tim Sheldon, D-Potlatch, have given Senate Republicans the boost to a majority coalition. According to the announcement, Tom would serve as the Senator Majority Leader, while Sheldon would be President Pro Tempore. The latter presides over the Senate when the Lieutenant Governor is unavailable to lead proceedings.

According to a [Policy Committee Structure document](#), Republicans would chair six committees, Democrats would chair six committees, and both parties would co-chair three committees. The budget committee, Senate Ways & Means, would be chaired by Sen. Andy Hill, R-Redmond, and the Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee would be chaired by Sen. Steve Litzow, R-Mercer Island.

The document also lists who would chair or co-chair other committees, as well as who would serve as the “ranking” member of committees chaired by Senate Democrats.

The [press release](#) states that the new caucus would form the committee structure when the Legislature convenes January 14. None of the committees would have more than a one-vote member margin between Republicans and Democrats.

The interplay between political parties was set up last month after Republicans saw a net gain of one seat in the November election and incumbent Sen. Don Benton, R-Vancouver, was named the winner after a hand recount that concluded last week.

Senate Democrats had chosen [Sen. Ed Murray, D-Seattle as Majority Leader](#) last month, following the retirement of Sen. Lisa Brown, D-Spokane.

Democrats announced their [committee structure](#) (podcast), and the principle of a one-vote

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committee on Education Funding to focus on meeting the state's funding obligation to K-12 education. Under their structure, Sen. Jim Hargrove, D-Hoquiam, would chair Senate Ways & Means, while Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, D-Bothell, would continue as education chair.

Senate Republicans rejected the Democrat's proposed structure, and suggested a power-sharing arrangement. When they met 11 days ago, Senate Republicans elected Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, as the leader of the Republican Caucus.

At the time of this posting, Senate Democrats had not issued a formal statement on the Majority Coalition Caucus. Look [here](#) for a statement, when available.

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