



Washington State
School Directors' Association

Legislative Update

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

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Special session called, legislators return May 13

The 105-day legislative session crawled to a close today, with the gavel falling on the 63rd Legislature at 6:15 p.m.

The House passed two bills, one of which was the 2013-15 transportation budget and the other on school district non-renewal notices. [HB 2017](#) would authorize school districts and ESDs to use a June 15th date for contract non-renewal notices if the omnibus operating budget had not passed the Legislature by the end of a regular session.

The bill did not receive a hearing, but was pulled from the House Education Committee to the floor today. It is sponsored by Rep. Kevin Parker, R-Spokane, and is designed to give districts more predictability when waiting for the Legislature to adopt a budget. The Senate took no action on the bill.

For its part, the Senate worked on concurrence, passed a handful of bills, and confirmed more than a dozen gubernatorial appointments.

Bills left on the floor calendar are returned to the chamber of origin's Rules committees as part of the close-out process of the regular session.

Inslee calls special session

Gov. Jay Inslee announced that he will call legislators back to Olympia May 13 for the start of a special session. Special sessions are authorized to run 30 days and the governor cannot limit the types of bills or topics that are considered in a special session. Usually there is agreement among the five corners on what will be covered, but that does not appear to be the case this time.

In making his announcement, Inslee said that he expects his budget staff will start on budget assumptions related to the budget proposals immediately. Assumptions might include items such as projected savings on moving part-time K-12 staff to the new health benefits exchange. When asked about the Senate approach that would transfer trust land funds from the construction account to an education operating account, Inslee said the Supreme Court wouldn't have time to rule on the constitutionality of that shift before May 13th and he would ask the Senate to defer to his opinion. His opinion, by the way, is that it is a bad idea.

Inslee said the Legislature needs to focus on three main issues when it returns:

1. An operating budget that makes a substantial down payment on education, but not on the backs of seniors or the poor;
2. A transportation plan that preserves funding for existing infrastructure projects and funds new projects, including the new bridge across the Columbia River; and
3. Important education policy measures to ensure that new education funding will achieve results.

However Inslee also referenced several non-budget issues that remain priorities for his administration. These include legislation on stiffer penalties for repeat DUI offenses, common sense laws to reduce gun violence, the reproductive parity act, and the state DREAM act. With the latter two bills, Inslee said that enough legislators already had indicated their support – it was just a matter of bringing the measures to the floor for a vote.

On the operating budget, Inslee said the parties were “light years apart,” and the May 13 deadline would bring pressure on the top negotiators to craft a solution. He said it was his opinion that to meet the funding needed to satisfy the McCleary decision, the Legislature must close some tax breaks that are no longer necessary or don’t stack up against a priority of education funding.

Next steps

With everyone returning to home districts to recharge, school districts are encouraged to invite their local legislators into their schools for a quick tour and a conversation about budget impacts.

This is a good time to compare the various budgets and the effect on district operations. Of particular interest to legislators will be how the new state education investments would free up local levy dollars and the effect of certain proposals, such as the House investment in compensation for classified and administrative staff salaries, on local funding.

It is also an opportunity to talk about some of the policy bills that are still under consideration and are likely to be topics of the special session. These include changes to Alternative Learning Experience programs, school discipline practices, and school grading, to name a few.

House Republicans announce new leaders

House Republicans elected Snohomish County Representative Dan Kristiansen as their new minority leader at a reorganization meeting Saturday. Kristiansen replaces Rep. Richard DeBolt of Chehalis, who stepped down earlier in the month for health reasons.

In other caucus action, Moses Lake Representative Judy Warnick was elected caucus chair, after Kristiansen moved to the top spot. Rep. Liz Pike, R-Camas, stepped down as assistant floor leader and Pierce County Rep. Steve O’Ban was elected to fill that leadership post. Rep. Joel Kretz of Wauconda remains the House Republican’s deputy leader.

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