

CITY OF SEATTLE
2006 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

JANUARY 17, 2006

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The 2006 legislative session began on Monday, January 9. This is a 60 day session scheduled to end on March 9. Democrats control the House by a 55-43 margin and control the Senate by a 26-23 margin. Major issues facing the legislature include a supplemental budget year with a new revenue forecast showing a surplus of approximately \$1.4 billion. Issues already gathering attention include anti-discrimination legislation, sex offenders, increasing affordable housing and regional transportation/governance.

SESSION PRIORITIES

Transportation

HB 2491 and **HB 2871** would change transportation governance in the Puget Sound region. Both would use elected boards who would oversee planning and development of regional transportation efforts currently under the Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit, and regional transportation investment district (RTID). There will be work sessions and hearings throughout the week of January 16.

SB 6599 requires a November 2007 vote on a joint roads and transit funding proposal and new transportation governance plan. The governance proposal will be developed by a seven member board appointed by the Governor. This bill will be heard in the Senate Transportation Committee on January 19.

Housing

HB 2418 would increase the availability of affordable housing. This bill would take a small portion of the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) without increasing the tax. The funds would go a number of programs including \$1 million for the Homeless Families Services Fund. **Seattle supports this measure.**

HB 2673 will be heard in the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee on January 18. This bill sets up a six project pilot to determine the feasibility of a sales tax based tax increment financing program. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Education

Governor's Gregoire's proposed budget includes \$38.5 million for assistance to those that do not initially pass the WASL. **Seattle supports this funding proposal.**

The budget also includes \$2.4 million for a life science research facility in South Lake Union. **Seattle supports this funding proposal.**

Civil Rights

For the 29th year in a row a bill to expand the state discrimination laws to include sexual orientation was introduced. **HB 2661** will be heard in the House State Government Operations & Accountability Committee on January 17. **Seattle supports this measure.**

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Capital Budget

Governor Gregoire's supplemental Capital Budget includes \$2 million for the Seattle Aquarium. **Seattle supports this funding proposal.**

Energy Portfolio Standards

HB 2531 would require utilities to develop integrated resources plans (IRP), these plans would be submitted to Community Trade & Economic Development and then they would be required to establish a statewide renewable resource goal and would encourage utilities to meet the statewide goal. This is similar to a bill last year, however if passed the enactment of this would subject to a vote of the people. It would be a referendum in November. We are currently evaluating this bill.

Environmental Health

HB 2662 and **SB 6428** which would provide electronic product recycling through manufacturer financed opportunities will be heard on January 17 in the House Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks Committee and the Senate Water, Energy & Environment Committee. These bills are the result of a task force effort to develop a system to manage e-waste. The bills limit the e-waste to computers and televisions. The cost of the program would be incorporated into the purchase price of the product. There is likely to be a competing measure which would add a fee that would show up at the point of sale. **Seattle supports these bills.**

Streamline Sales Tax

SB 6594, conforming Washington's tax structure to the streamlined sales and use tax agreement, will be heard in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on January 17. The bill as introduced would allow up to \$25 million for mitigation to cities that are adversely affected by the shift in the distribution of sales tax from a point of purchase system to point of delivery. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Weights and Measures Fees

SB 6365 would increase the registration fees for weights and measuring devices. The Senate Agriculture & Rural Economic Development Committee will hear this bill on January 19. The companion bill, **HB 2559**, has not yet been scheduled in the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Policy Issues

Elections and General Government

The House State Government Committee and Senate Government Operations Committee held public hearings on **HB 1436** and **SB 6221** which would allow cities and counties the option of implementing a program to allow publicly financed campaigns for local offices. **Seattle testified in support of both bills.**

Energy

HB 2370 provides \$7.6 million in one-time spending for low-income energy assistance programs. The money will come from fines that have been paid to the Utilities and Transportation Commission. The bill passed the House and Senate unanimously and has already been signed by the Governor. **Seattle supports this measure.**

Siting of transmission corridors will be discussed this session. **HB 1020** is being revived from last session. This bill gave the Energy Facilities Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) authority to site all transmission corridors for 115kv or more. However, the new bill will likely limit EFSEC authority to corridors that have been designated by the federal government as corridors of national significance, as part of the Federal Energy Act. There are likely to be other bills and we will review them as they are introduced.

Health Care

SB 6366 requires every local health jurisdiction to develop a pandemic flu preparedness and response plan. WA State Dept. of Health will provide assistance and funding for the planning and implementation of the plan. The bill includes a proposal of \$20 million to help with this effort. This bill was heard in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee on January 16. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Human Services

HB 2376 would repeal cost-sharing in medical programs. This would eliminate “cost-sharing” as an option for those on medical assistance. **Seattle supports this measure.**

Land Use

There were a number of bills which attempt to increase affordable housing, specifically accessory dwelling units (ADU). **HB 2323**, **HB 2324** and **HB 2325** were heard this week in the House Local Government Committee. The Association of WA Cities and WA State Association of Counties expressed concern that these bills were too prescriptive. The Low-Income Housing Alliance will be introducing legislation which would also increase affordable housing.

Public Safety

A great deal of attention is being paid to sex offenders and there are too many bills to list in a weekly report. We will be monitoring those that would change reporting requirements, zoning restrictions, monitoring or any actions would be preempt cities authority related to these issues.

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