

CITY OF SEATTLE
2006 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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The first cut-off day for legislation to be passed out of the policy committees is Friday, February 3. The cut-off for fiscal and transportation committees is Tuesday, February 7.

Session Priorities

Transportation

SB 6733, which would help to ensure that the Monorail winds up its affairs and removes the motor vehicle excise tax imposed on drivers in Seattle, was referred to the Senate Transportation Committee. **SB 6786** is similar in the intent of the bill. The major difference is that SB 6733 would maintain a 5 person board to handle the necessary affairs of the dissolution. HB 6786 would give this authority to the Seattle City Council. These bills will be heard in the Senate Transportation Committee on February 1. **Seattle supports SB 6733.**

On January 30, the House Transportation Committee will hear a number of bills that would provide local government with additional funding options for transportation purposes. **HB 1989** would provide the option of a vehicle license fee of \$20. **HB 2965** would modify an existing fee on commercial trailers. The fee would be dedicated to local roads improvements through a state administered grant program. **HB 3138** would modify the transportation benefit districts to include King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties and allow all of the revenue to be used for local roads.

HB 3089 which would revise the commute trip reduction program will be heard in the House Transportation Committee on January 30. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Housing

SHB 2418 increases the availability of affordable housing. This takes 3.039% of existing state Real Estate Excise Tax (REET). The funds will raise \$100 million and will be distributed over four-years in \$25 million increments. The funds will be used to fill the backlog of the Housing Trust Fund, migrant or farm worker housing, rental vouchers, weatherization, developmental disability housing, domestic violence housing, and the homeless families services fund. The REET will not be raised.

HB 2673 passed out of the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee and now goes to the Finance Committee. This bill sets up a six project pilot to determine the feasibility of a tax increment financing program using local and state sales and excise taxes and property taxes. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

HB 2984 authorizes cities, towns, and counties to implement affordable housing incentive programs. This bill gives local jurisdictions the option of encouraging or requiring a number of tools to increase the availability of affordable housing. Density bonuses, parking requirements and fee waivers are a few of the tools provided in this bill. This bill was developed in conjunction with the Low-Income Housing Alliance and Seattle participated in this discussion.

While this is about increasing affordable housing it relates to how zoning and local regulations can impact affordability. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Education

SB 6466 and **HB 2964** which would create a department of early learning department were heard in both houses and passed out of the committees. These bills will now have to go through the fiscal committees. This is an early initiative of Governor Gregoire related to her Washington Learns task force. The Governor testified before both chambers on these bills.

HJR 4205, authorizing a vote of the people to amend the state Constitution to allow a simple majority to approve school levies passed the House by a vote of 74-23. It now goes to the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education Committee. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Civil Rights

SHB 2661 which expands the jurisdiction of the human rights commission to include sexual orientation was heard in the Senate Committee this week and the Office of Civil Rights provided the committee with data on our experience with having this right protected in Seattle. The bill was approved by the Senate by a vote of 25-23 and the House immediately concurred. After 29 years this bill will finally move to the Governor's desk and will be signed into law on January 31. Congratulations to Rep. Ed Murray and all of the supporters of this legislation. **Seattle supports this measure.**

Session Objectives

Firearm Safety and Crime Guns

SB 5343 regulating the sale of firearms at gun shows and events had a hearing in the Senate Judiciary. Lots of supporters and opponents turned out for the hearing. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to get out of committee by cutoff. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Human Services – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

HB 2970 preserves the WorkFirst child safety net program. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that children whose parents are out of compliance with WorkFirst requirements continue to receive benefits. The House bill will have a hearing on January 30. Its companion **SB 6628** was heard last week in the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee. **Seattle supports these bills.**

Streamline Sales Tax

SB 6594, conforming Washington's tax structure to the streamlined sales and use tax agreement, unanimously passed out of the Senate and was referred to the House Finance Committee. The bill includes full 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 bill was heard in the Senate Agriculture & Rural Economic Development Committee on January 24. The companion bill, **HB 2559**, was heard in the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee on January 25. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Policy Issues

Economic Development

HB 2818 and **SB 6558** propose to form a WA motion picture competitiveness program to provide incentives for this industry to film in the state. The program will be funded by private contributions in exchange for state tax credits. Both bills were heard last week. **Seattle supports these bills.**

Elections and General Government

HB 1436 which would provide cities and counties the option of implementing a program to allow publicly financed campaigns for local offices is awaiting a vote on the House floor. The companion bill, **SB 6221**, is still in the Senate Government Operations Committee. **Seattle supports these bills.**

Energy

HB 1020 regarding electric transmission passed the House unanimously and will be referred to the Senate Water, Energy & Environment Committee. Seattle opposed this bill last session because it preempted cities from siting decisions related to transmission corridors and gave the authority to the Energy Facilities Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). This bill is moving because the Federal Energy Act states that if a transmission corridor of national significance is to be developed in a state which does not have a siting process, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) would have authority to site that corridor. Cities will propose three things in order for us to support HB 1020: 1) Only those corridors designated by the Federal Energy Office as corridors of national significance would be included; 2) Only corridors above 115kv would be included; 3) The applicant must pay the costs of staff time to participate in the EFSEC process. This has been an issue of no one wanting to relinquish any siting authority. We should have language early next week and will be able to review.

Hazardous and Solid Waste

HB 2662 and **SB 6428** which would create an electronic product recycling program both had passed out of their committees and were referred to the Rules Committees. Products covered are computer monitors, desktop, laptop and portable computers, as well as televisions. **Seattle supports these measures.**

HB 1731 would require mercury components to be removed from cars that are no longer useful and are being scrapped. This bill will be heard in the House Appropriations Committee on January 31. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Housing

HB 3234 which authorizes faith communities to host temporary homeless encampments subject to restrictions was introduced and referred to the House Housing Committee. This bill says faith communities cannot have religious expression restricted from hosting homeless encampments. It also provides that local governments cannot limit their stay to less than 90-days. This bill is in response to restrictions put forward by the City of Bellevue. Seattle's agreement with SHARE/WHEEL would not be affected by this bill.

Human Services

SHB 2002 which authorizes limited continuing foster care and support services up to age twenty-one passed out of the House Children & Family Services Committee and is now before the Appropriations Committee. An approved amendment limits this additional support to 50

clients. The purpose of this amendment is to keep the fiscal note down. **Seattle supports this bill.**

General Assistance for the Unemployable (GAU) 2006 is in a good position. Last year we believed there would be an \$18 million deficit in the program because the legislature reduced GAU by that amount last session. Fortunately, the actual deficit was only \$5 million and Governor Gregoire's proposed budget fills the gap.

Key Arena

HB 3233 and **SB 6849** would provide the King County Council authority to impose (or continue) a number of taxes that would be used for arts and heritage organizations in King County and to improve or build a facility for the Sonics and improve the existing Mariners facility. The taxes include a two percent lodging tax, sales tax credit of 0.017, two percent car rental tax and a restaurant sales tax of 0.5 percent. All of these taxes are currently in place and set to expire once bonds for Safeco Field and Qwest Field are paid off. HB 3233 was originally referred to the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee but was re-referred to the House Finance Committee. SB 6849 was referred to the Ways & Means Committee. Although no hearings are scheduled at this time it is likely that hearings will be held after the committee cut-offs dates.

Public Safety

HB 3205 clarifies the authority to apprehend conditionally released persons. Persons who fall into this category are the violent sex offenders who will receive 24-hour supervision while residing at the new facility located at 1st & Spokane. This legislation would give law enforcement the authority to detain a person who is violating their conditions of release by either taking them to the county jail or back to the secure facility. **Seattle supports this measure.**

Revenue

HJR 4214 would propose to amend the Constitution, with a vote of the people, to limit the assessments of real property values to inflation or one percent per year, whichever is less. The House Finance Committee heard this issue on January 24. **Seattle opposes this legislation.**

SB 6385 will be heard by the Senate Ways & Means Committee on February 1. The companion bill is **HB 2671**. These bills eliminate the state's 5% mandatory assessment penalty on unpaid or underpaid state tax bills and audit assessments. Due to the link to state penalties in the model B&O tax ordinance, elimination of the 5% assessment would also apply to Seattle and any other B&O city.

Transportation

HB 2821 which proposes to open HOV lanes during non-peak hours was heard in the House Transportation Committee on January 23. The proposal would define peak hours as 6-9 AM and 3-7 PM Monday through Friday. **Seattle opposes this legislation.**