



CITY OF SEATTLE 2011 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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Weekly Overview

Last week was the third week of the thirty-day special session. The Senate spent most of the week in Olympia passing priority bills over to the House. The Senate has said that in addition to taking action on the operating and capital budgets during the special session, it also wants several policy bills to pass, including a constitutional amendment to change the state's debt ceiling, worker's compensation reforms, and teacher layoff reforms. The Senate also held Ways & Means Committee meetings, including a hearing on Wednesday on the new medical cannabis bill that Senator Kohl-Welles introduced ([SB 5955](#)).

The House was also in Olympia much of last week both passing bills and holding committee meetings. During a House Ways & Means Committee meeting on Wednesday, two bills that the City is interested in passed out of committee: [HB 2048](#), concerning low-income and homeless housing assistance surcharges; and [HB 2082](#), restructuring the Disability Lifeline program.

Last week the Governor signed one of our priority bills, and she has scheduled several others for action on Monday, May 16th.

This is an abbreviated version of the bulletin; during the special session we will be providing less frequent and shorter bulletins since there is less to update on than during the regular session, but we will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

Updates on Priorities

Budget: The operating and capital budgets remain the primary focus of the special session, but right now all of the action on these issues continues to be behind closed doors. As negotiations between the two chambers move forward, we will pay particular attention to protecting state-local shared revenues from being swept (most importantly, the liquor profits). We will also focus on the funding levels for Disability Lifeline, community health clinics, Working Connections child care, other key safety net programs, and education funding. In the capital budget we will continue to focus on the Housing Trust Fund and MTCA funding.

Disability Lifeline: The House passed a Disability Lifeline reform bill, [ESHB 2082](#), by a vote of 53-36 on Friday. Sergeant Joseph Fountain from SPD testified in support of this bill on behalf of the City because it represents the best opportunity to save some basic support for this vulnerable population. The bill renames the program, preserves medical coverage for recipients, maintains a cash benefit for those who will be eligible for SSI, and provides housing and other basic needs support for other benefit recipients.

Medical Cannabis: We continue to work closely with Senator Kohl-Welles and other legislative leaders to see if we can pass a new bill during the special session to fix some of the issues left unresolved by the Governor's partial veto of [E2SSB 5073](#). As mentioned above, on Tuesday Senator Kohl-Welles introduced [SB 5955](#), and on Wednesday the bill had a hearing in Senate Ways & Means. Unfortunately, there was very limited time for the hearing (only 20 minutes), so only a random fraction of the people that signed up to testify got to speak. Several voices in support of the bill did not get a chance to testify, including the City of Seattle, the ACLU, and several others.

On Thursday we met with legislative leaders, staff, and several stakeholder groups to discuss the new legislation and the prospects for moving it forward. The meeting made it clear that passing a bill during the special session is going to be challenging because at this point legislators have limited bandwidth and are primarily focused on grappling with the budget and related policy bills. However, the good news is that the Governor has said positive things about the approach in the new bill, so we feel very good about the likelihood of her signing the bill if we can get it to her desk.

Education: On Thursday, May 12th, the Governor signed [2SSB 5427](#), regarding an assessment of students in state-funded full-day kindergarten. Seattle supported this legislation, which will help ensure the success of our students in Seattle and across the state.

Looking Ahead

The special session will continue next week. On Monday, May 16th, the Governor has scheduled action on several priority bills. We expect negotiations to continue on the budgets and also action in both chambers on policy bills necessary to implement the budget.