



CITY OF SEATTLE 2013 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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Week Overview

The first week of the 2013 legislative session started with a flurry on Monday January 14th. In its opening session, the Senate's new "majority coalition" voted to change the rules to allow for a philosophical majority to serve as the governing majority, over the party majorities. Democratic Senator Rodney Tom will serve as the majority leader, and Senator Tim Sheldon will serve as President Pro Tem. The Senate also confirmed committee leadership, which includes three Democrats as committee chairs or co-chairs but also gives disproportionate majority power on the critical Rules and Ways and Means committees.

On Tuesday, Governor Gregoire delivered her final "state of the state" address to the legislature, and on Wednesday, Governor Inslee gave his inaugural address. The new governor mentioned the importance of transportation, new green jobs, and preserving women's health care options as we implement federal health care.

Finally, the House got right to work this week, with a packed schedule of committee hearings and work sessions on topics such as energy efficiencies, affordable housing, and the state of cities and counties.

Areas of Primary Focus

Protecting the most vulnerable

Budget: The House held multiple public hearings on Governor Gregoire's budget ([HB 1057/SB 5034](#)), with specific focuses on human services, corrections, K12 and higher education, and natural resources. Many of those testifying spoke in favor of Gregoire's decision to use new revenue to avoid even deeper cuts to basic human services and other programs.

Education

The House Education committee held a work session to review the results of the Quality Education Council's report to the legislature, and the Senate Early Learning and K12 Education committee held a session to review the McCleary decision ruling and discuss options for efficiencies. In the media, the Senate committee chair Republican Steve Litzow

mentioned that he will be having weekly meetings with House committee chair Democrat Sharon Tomiko Santos.

Transportation, Economic Development and Infrastructure

Transportation Funding: The House Transportation Committee held a work session on “The State of Transportation,” which was presented by Paula Hammond, Secretary of the Department of Transportation. The Committee also held work sessions on Governor Gregoire’s proposed Transportation Budget and Governor Gregoire’s proposal to pay for pupil transportation out of the Transportation Budget.

In short, current revenues are insufficient to complete projects underway and preserve the existing system. Of the 37.5 cents of the state gas tax, 29.5 cents are committed to projects, debt service and local governments. That leaves only 8 cents available for use on state highways, bridges, and ferries for maintenance and preservation. The 10 year unmet need just for basic maintenance and an operation, and preservations, is projected to be \$3.1 billion.

Governor Gregoire proposed to meet the state’s obligations under McCleary in part by enacting a phased in wholesale tax on gas to pay for pupil transportation. This new tax would cover the entire \$906 million in pupil transportation costs by the 2017-2019 biennium. This would free up other funds to be used for other basic education purposes, such as reduced class size and all day kindergarten.

Capital Budget: The House has scheduled a hearing on Governor Gregoire’s proposed capital budget on January 21st: [HB 1089](#)/ [SB 5035](#).

Public Safety

Mentally ill offenders unable to stand trial: There is a hearing on [HB 1114](#) scheduled for January 24th. This bill, in part, would ensure that a state hospital evaluates defendants charged with serious nonfelony crimes who have been found to be not competent to stand trial. Currently, there are people who are being released without being evaluated.

Speed Limits: On January 22nd, the House Transportation Committee will be hearing Representative Cindy Ryu’s legislation ([HB 1045](#)) to allow cities to lower the speed limits on certain streets to 20 MPH. This bill has bi-partisan sponsorship, as does its Senate companion bill, [SB 5066](#). Seattle supports this legislation, which would allow us to more easily and less expensively make this change to increase safety on some of our neighborhood streets.

City Fiscal Health

Budget: In her budget, the Governor made additional cuts to local shared revenues, including the liquor revenues. Last year, the legislature made not just a one-time cut to cities shared revenues and profits on liquor sales, but also set those local revenues at a static level moving forward. Seattle will be working with the Association of Washington Cities to restore the ability for local revenues to grow over time with sales, to address the growth in population and increased need for public safety investments.

Other Issues of Significant Interest

Human Services and Health: This week, Seattle's OIR staff joined human services advocates and providers from across the state in a meeting with Speaker Frank Chopp to update him on the positive impacts of the Housing and Essential Needs Program/Disability Lifeline and to discuss the need to preserve funding for this critical program into the future.

Energy Efficiency: Glen Atwood from Seattle City Light presented in front of the House Environment Committee on January 18, to share information on the successes, challenges, and opportunities in energy conservation.

Public Records: Several bills have been released related to mitigating the costs of egregious or commercial public records requests, including [HB 1128](#), which allows local governments to seek a civil injunction when faced with financially motivated or punitive requests. [HB 1037](#) would allow jurisdictions to charge a fee for records requested for commercial purposes. It is scheduled for a hearing on January 23rd.

Service Animals in Housing: The House Judiciary committee held a hearing on legislation to streamline the state and federal regulations related to discrimination based on disabilities, especially related to accommodating residents with service animals. This bill, [HB 1024](#), would allow up to collect federal funding for inspections, allowing the state to collect federal funding for discrimination-based inspections.

Looking Ahead

With the celebrations done and all the newly elected officials sworn in, the legislature will get down to the work of this difficult legislative session. Additionally, advocates from legislators' districts from throughout Washington State will likely be in Olympia on Monday for the Martin Luther King holiday to talk about the importance of the human services safety net and other essential programs for their communities.