



## CITY OF SEATTLE 2015 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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*The City of Seattle is committed to being a safe, vibrant, interconnected, and affordable city.*

### **Week Overview**

This past Friday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, marked the first major cutoff of the 2015 legislative session, as this was the deadline for all bills to be voted out of policy committee in their house of origin. This past week saw marathon committee hearings with both chambers trying to “exec” as many bills as possible. Bills that did make the deadline moved either to the Rules Committee (policy only bills) or to a fiscal committee if they had fiscal impacts. The next major deadline is next Friday the 27<sup>th</sup>, as the fiscal committees must complete their work on bills before then. After fiscal cutoff, all action moves to the chamber floors, as all bills must be out of their house of origin by March 11<sup>th</sup> to be considered by the other chamber.

With cut-off looming, Seattle leaders traveled to Olympia to weigh in on numerous issues. Mayor Murray testified at the Senate Transportation Committee’s February 18<sup>th</sup> hearing on the transportation package; Councilmember Tom Rasmussen also attended the hearing and held numerous one-on-one meetings with legislators on transportation, Medicaid reimbursements for services for the elderly and most vulnerable, and other City priorities; Council President Tim Burgess testified in support of [HB 1739](#), which would eliminate the death penalty; and City Attorney Pete Homes and David Mendoza, the Mayor’s policy expert, met with legislators to discuss marijuana policy.

### **Priority Areas**

#### **Budget and Infrastructure**

On Friday the State’s Economic and Revenue Forecast Council released its [forecast](#), the House and Senate having agreed to move up the state budget forecast to earlier than past years. The General Fund-State revenue forecast has been increased \$107 million for the 2013-15 biennium and by \$129 million for the 2015-17 biennium.

Two priority infrastructure bills for the City, [HB 1957](#) relating to job order contracts, and [HB 1911](#) relating to Latecomer fees for utility development infrastructure, both passed out of committee and were sent to Rules.

## Education

Washington State legislators and officials are estimating it could require up to \$6 billion to fully meet the requirements of the Washington State Supreme Court McCleary Decision. Initial reports indicate that this is nearly double the amount legislators were expecting heading into this session. The increase is due, in part, because the McCleary ruling states school districts should not be relying on local levies to fill holes in the state budget. Legislators have been exploring levy swap and other property tax adjustments as possible solutions.

## Safety Net, Housing and Health Care

Legislation dealing with a minimum wage increase, required paid sick leave for all workers, and employee anti retaliation all passed the House Appropriations Committee and will be sent to the House floor for a vote. However, other bills aimed at restricting or rolling back recent local advancements on these issues continue to be introduced, including Senator Mark Miloscia's (R) [SB 6029](#) – which creates a state-wide \$12/hour living wage and preempts local jurisdictions from enacting policies regarding wages, hours, employee retention and leave.

## Environment

Two bills addressing transportation of hazardous materials by rail saw movement this week. Republican Senator Doug Ericksen's [SB 5057](#), received a hearing in the Senate Ways and Means committee on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Testimony centered on a proposal to use Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) funds for implementing the policy. Supporters testified that the funding would provide hazardous response training and equipment necessary to treat oil spills. Opponents worried that MTCA funds were already too depleted and suggested that legislators increase and expand the barrel tax, which has not been increased since 1997, as a better source of revenue.

Meanwhile, the Oil Transportation Safety Act [HB 1449](#), sponsored by Rep. Jessyn Farrell moved on to the House Finance Committee where it will receive a hearing on February 24<sup>th</sup>. This bill does raise the barrel tax by \$.10 per 42-gallon barrel and expands it to include oil received by pipeline and rail.

## Transportation

The Senate Transportation Committee held two public hearings on the Senate's proposed multi-billion dollar transportation package, which was delivered as 11 separate bills focusing individually on various fiscal and policy aspects. Fiscal bills were heard on Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> and policy bills on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup>. An overflow crowd on the second day was cautiously supportive of the package, citing the overall funding and project proposals as positives while acknowledging problematic issues around low carbon fuel standards, sales tax dedication, and prevailing wages on labor contracts. Mayor Ed Murray testified indicating the package was a good "first step".

The Committee then held an executive session on all 11 bills on Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup>. Although original voice votes indicated that all 11 bills had passed, subsequent review of the signature boards indicated that two bills, one concerning the sales tax dedication and the second on prevailing wage, had failed to garner sufficient votes to pass. The legislation now moves to the Senate floor, with a vote expected in the next two weeks.

## **Public Safety**

### **Public Records**

Barb Graff of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management testified in support of [SHB 1980](#), which deals with Sunshine Committee recommendations on exemptions from disclosure under the public records act. In particular, the City was supportive of an amendment that exempts from public disclosure the information obtained through the Smart 911 system, including information voluntarily submitted. The bill received executive action in the House State Government Committee on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Marijuana**

[SB 5052](#), Senator Ann Rivers' (R) "Cannabis Patient Protection Act", which passed the Senate last Friday, was given a first reading in the House and was referred to the Healthcare and Wellness Committee.

An alternative bill, [SB 5519](#), the "Marijuana Reform Act" by Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D), was given Executive Action on February 16<sup>th</sup> and moved to the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Representatives from the City Attorney's office and the City provided testimony in support.

After the failure of the House omnibus marijuana bill HB 1461 to move out of committee, a number of new, issue specific-bills are being prepared in that chamber.

### **Looking Ahead**

Moving toward the next cutoff, fiscal committees (Ways and Means and Transportation in the Senate; Appropriations, Finance and Transportation in the House) will have full slates of executive sessions this week. Meanwhile, both chambers will move to the floor to begin debate on those bills that have passed their first hurdles.