

CITY OF SEATTLE
2005 STATE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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The first cut-off for all policy committees occurs on Wednesday, March 2. Bills must be passed out of the policy committee to “stay alive” for the next process. The cut-off for legislation dealing with fiscal and transportation issues will be on Monday, March 7.

Senate Gubernatorial Appointment (SGA) 9130 appointing Councilmember Richard McIver to the Housing Finance Commission was passed by the Senate Financial Institutions, Housing & Consumer Protection Committee and referred to the Rules Committee.

SESSION PRIORITIES

Transportation Solutions

HB 1989 and **SB 6016** were heard in the House and Senate Transportation Committees on February 23. These bills provide local transportation funding options for cities and counties. The bills would allow cities and counties to choose from the following options: \$20 vehicle license fee, 1 ½ cent gross weight fee, street utility fee and 20% local option gas tax. **Seattle supports these bills.**

SB 6012 would make transportation an authorized use for parking and business improvement areas. The Senate Transportation Committee will hear this bill on March 1. The companion bill is **HB 2242**. **Seattle supports these measures.**

State Funding

HB 2209 would extend the 0.5% sales tax in restaurants, the 2% sales tax on rental cars, the 2% sales tax on hotel and motel rooms to pay for renovations at Key Arena and provide funding for arts organizations in King County. This bill will be heard in the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee on February 28. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Annexation

HB 2120 which would allow counties to establish “urban impact districts” will have a hearing on March 1. The urban impact districts would be unincorporated urban areas of the county which would collect a utility tax. Counties are not currently authorized to collect that tax. The money collected in the impact district would be used to fund infrastructure in areas that are to be annexed. **Seattle supports this measure.**

Consumer Protection

SSB 5692 which requires a number of steps to disclose information by businesses that provide tax refund anticipation loans however it is not as specific as Seattle’s ordinance and would preempt local jurisdictions. The bill was amended and passed out of the Senate Financial Institutions, Housing & Consumer Protection Committee and referred to the Rules Committee. The amended version adds a reference to the State’s Consumer Protection Act which helps to give it a little more strength.

Firearm Safety

HB 1687 which restrict the possession of firearms by persons found not guilty by reason of insanity had a hearing on February 25. Lt. Landy Black from the Seattle Police Department testified in support of the measure. He also provided as an example of story in which restricting firearms for persons not competent to stand trial would also be beneficial. The committee members and the sponsor of the bill Rep. Jim Moeller (Vancouver) were very interested in that as well. **Seattle supports this bill.**

Weights & Measures

HB 1440 allowing cities to impose local fees to pay for a weight & measures program was heard in the House Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade Committee. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

POLICY ISSUES

Education

SB 5144 and **SJR 8202** were passed out of the Senate Ways & Means Committee and referred to the Rules Committee. SB 5144 would allow a simple majority of the voters to authorize school levies and bonds. SJR 8202 is a constitutional amendment which must be approved by the legislature and passed by the voters to enact the new legislation. **Seattle supports these measures.**

HB 2123 would require each higher education institution to adopt off campus code of conduct rules. This bill will be heard in the House Higher Education Committee on March 1. **Seattle supports this legislation.**

Elections and General Government

HB 1748 and **SB 5746** require the state to share a portion of the primary and general election costs in even numbered years. HB 1748 passed out of the House State Government Operations & Accountability Committee and was referred to the Appropriations Committee. SB 5746 was passed out of the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and referred to the Ways & Means Committee. **Seattle supports these bills.**

Energy

PSHB 1895 would make the Joint Committee on Energy Supply become the Joint Committee on Energy Supply and Conservation. The Committee would get an annual report from General Administration on conservation measures local jurisdictions could make in their facilities. The original bill required jurisdictions to implement the measures but the version passed out of committee makes it voluntary. We are still reviewing the impact but are pleased this will not conflict with our own conservation measures.

HB 1011 which creates interconnection standards passed out of committee. These standards are for residents and businesses with their own generators who want to connect into the larger utility grid. City Light staff has participated in the early discussions of the bill. There are concerns about some language and hope to work with the sponsors to address those concerns before a vote on the floor.

HB 2179 which would establish a process for disputes between electricity suppliers on service areas is scheduled for a hearing on March 1. This bill potentially could put public utilities under the review of the Utilities & Transportation Commission (UTC) because it states that if a public and private utility have a dispute the UTC is the body to resolve the matter. Given that the UTC represents the customers of the private utilities and not public utilities, and that state law clearly separates the UTC of having any authority over public utilities, **we oppose this bill.**

Growth Management and Land Use

The Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee had a lively hearing on eight growth management related bills. The topics ranged from the use of scientific information in the designation of critical areas to changing timelines for required comprehensive plans. The House Local Government Committee will hold a hearing on seven bills on February 28. I am not listing the bill numbers because some of them do not directly affect Seattle. We have been working with other jurisdictions and the Association of Washington Cities on these issues.

SB 5959 which would change the scope of leases with the Department of Natural Resources and public entities for state-owned aquatic lands had a hearing on February 23. A number of concerns were raised about the scope of the bill being too broad. We have proposed amendments to address those issues.

Seattle supports this measure.

Human Services

HB 2163 which establishes a homeless program had a hearing on February 24. This would require all counties to develop Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness similar to the one Seattle, King County and United Way developed and provide some funding by increasing the document recording fee. Concerns were raised at the hearing about provisions in the bill which restrict the \$10 recording fee passed a couple of sessions ago (HB 2060) which provided new money for housing. In addition concerns were raised in general about raising the fee too much. Prior to HB 2060 the recording fee was \$9, after HB 2060 passed it was \$19. If HB 2163 passes it would go to \$34 and apparently there is another bill in another committee which would then raise it to \$49. **Seattle supports this measure.**

General Assistance for the Unemployable (GAU) was entirely cut from Governor Locke's (no new taxes) budget. Advocates and lobbyists will be meeting on February 28 to discuss strategies in approaching this problem. Governor Gregoire will not be submitting her budget until mid-March (after the next revenue forecast).

Parks

Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program (WWRP) had their annual "Lobby Day." Bill Blair and Catherine Anstett from Parks & Recreation participated, as well as Matthew Johnston a citizen active in the Woodland Skate Park development. It was a successful day. Seattle was able to meet with ten legislators! There are four Seattle projects on the WWRP funding list. In addition to the skate park they are Myrtle Edwards, Ercolini Park Acquisition and South Lake Union. WWRP has been requesting a capital budget request at \$60 million.

Water & Water Quality

HB 1735 which allows limited water storage facilities (10,000 gallons) from permitting requirements had a hearing on February 23. The low number is to limit the scope of who would be exempted from permit requirements. We recommended to the Committee they consider 35,000 gallons because this would then capture many residential properties. **Seattle supports this bill.**

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