

# WA State NOW - Legislative Update April 15, 2001

## Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

Legislative Calendar – The deadline for all bills except for the budget to have passed the opposite house was Friday, April 13. After this date the only bills that can still be heard by the legislature are the budget and bills that passed each house but in different versions. The session ends on Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Priority Message of the Week** (If you can only do one thing, do this!)

Contact your representatives and ask for their support on the following two items

- Keep the Basic Health Plan intact – no increases in co-payments and no reductions in slots or benefits
- Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program – provide an additional \$2 million above the proposed cost of living increase to prevent about 600 ECEAP slots from being cut.

## Budget

NOW supports adjusting the 601 spending limit to eliminate re-basing and to change the spending cap formula to reflect the program growth that drives state spending (such as corrections and long term care, for example).

The Senate has passed its version of the budget. The budget is now in the House. The House version of the budget is expected to be released on Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>.

The information below summarizes the strengths and weaknesses in both the original budget submitted by the Governor and as passed by the Senate.

### **Problems in the Senate version of the budget:**

1. There is a large increase in Basic Health Plan co-pays and premiums (same as in Gov. Locke's proposed budget)
2. Cap on Children's Health Insurance Program (same as in Gov Locke's proposed budget)
3. Although the budget gives state employee's the same salary increase as teachers (3.7% and 3.1% based on Seattle Consumer Price Index), it only provides about half as much for vendors.
4. Sets a \$5 fee per credit hour for people attending community colleges to get their GED. (I think it is a dollar or free now).

### **Missing in Senate budget:**

1. \$400,000 for foster care recruitment (in Governor's)
2. \$808,000 for Medicaid expansion for Foster Youth (in Governor's budget)
3. Funding to protect Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program slots \$3 million (not in Governor's either)
4. Funding for the Women Infants & Children program (not in the Governor's budget either)
5. \$140,000 for children's mental health study (not in the Governor's budget either)
6. \$2.4 million for domestic violence shelters (part of capitol budget - not in the Governor's budget either)

### **Problems in Governor's budget which were fixed in Senate's version of the budget:**

1. Restores adult dental program for Medicaid recipients
2. Restores adult vision program for Medicaid recipients
3. Reduces the \$34 million proposed cut in the Medically Indigent program down to a \$3 million cut
4. Restores most of the CHORE cut
5. Funds \$42 million for transition programs for the developmentally disabled. (Requires the funds come out of existing county resources AND the total needed for developmentally disabled school graduates is \$7.9 million).
6. Funds overnight youth shelters at \$240,000
7. Increases tobacco prevention state plan by \$2.5 million per year (would be \$17.5 million if enacted).
8. Includes \$1 million for Emergency Food Assistance Program
9. Restores the adult day health program
10. Provides \$5 million in the Capitol budget to expand college based childcare centers

11. Increases money for the Community Services Facilities Program by \$4.16 million (capitol budget)
12. Brings housing Trust Fund up to \$78 million (capitol budget)
13. Funds a set aside in the Housing Trust Fund for Developmental Disabilities
14. Provides \$380,000 for sexual assault program legal advocates (total needed for every program to have one is \$1 million)
15. Respite funds for foster parents at \$2.4 million (total needed is 3.4 million)
16. \$1.05 million for kinship placements (need is \$8.9 million)

**Good things in both the Governor’s and Senate’s versions of the budget:**

1. Ticket to Work for folks with developmental and mental health issues - \$2.6 million. This allows individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health issues to continue receiving Medicaid funding while working.
2. Passport program for foster kids – \$966,000
3. Provides for caseload reductions in the Division of Children & Family Services
4. Child Placing Agency rate increase
5. \$2.578 million for breast and cervical cancer treatment (both??) definitely in the Senate version
6. Medicaid coverage for Dental sealants – \$61,000
7. Funding to implement anti-bullying training and program (See ESSB 5528 – Requiring policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities, listed below.)

## Health Care

**Assure equal access to quality affordable and accessible health care services for women and children.**

1. Contraceptive coverage needs to be easily accessible to everyone in the state. Washington State NOW believes that any health care plan that covers prescription drugs must include contraceptive coverage as a part of that coverage.
2. WA State NOW supports access for all women to the full range of reproductive services. WA State NOW will defend a woman’s right to choose, opposing any attempts to weaken the current law as passed by Initiative 120.

**2SSB 5820 – Relating to medical assistance for breast and cervical cancer treatment for low-income women.** (SUPPORT) This bill allows low-income women to receive medical assistance for the treatment of breast and cervical cancer. SSSB 5820 has passed out of the Senate and is in the House Health Care Committee. Because it is addressed in the Senate Budget, it is still technically alive. Call your Representatives to support funding for treatment of breast & cervical cancer for low-income women.

## Ending Violence Against Women

**Washington State NOW supports efforts to end violence against women and their families in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence**

1. Modify WA State’s unemployment compensation laws to allow claimant’s to qualify for unemployment by adding a clause to the statute that would allow the individual to receive unemployment when they leave work due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
2. Support modification to the Domestic Violence and Stalking laws as they apply to Protection and Anti-Harassment orders to:
  - a) Add a “bubble standard” which would require the stalker or assailant to be no closer than a specified number of feet to the victim.
  - b) Close the gap to expand the coverage of Protection Orders on released prisoners so that the release orders and protection orders do not override and therefore vacate the protection order.
  - c) Allow minors to obtain anti-harassment orders
3. Protect domestic violence victims from eviction due to the violence and police visits.
4. Pass legislation that provides privileged communication between domestic violence victim advocates and victims similar to what is already in the statute for sexual assault victims.
5. Support use of surplus Welfare Reform funds to provide services for children who are in or have been in domestic violence situations and need help.

6. Support the Sexual Assault programs request for state funding to support community sexual assault programs so to provide legal advocacy and therapeutic services for sexual assault victims and to fund a statewide hotline for sexual assault victims.

**SSB 5309 – Providing funding for local government criminal justice (SUPPORT).** SSB 5309 would increase traffic fines and fees, which are paid into the Public Safety and Education Account. This would make additional funds available for crime victims and sexual assault programs. SSB 5309 has passed out of the House and has been sent back to the Senate for concurrence on the amendments passed by the House.