

WA State NOW - Legislative Update May 6, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

The legislature adjourned the 2001 regular legislative session on Sunday, April 22nd and re-convened for a 30-day special session on Wednesday, April 25th. Governor Locke called the special session in order to deal with several uncompleted issues from the regular session including the biennial operating budget, the transportation budget, and the capitol budget. In addition there were several pieces of legislation that the Governor and key leadership in the House and Senate wanted to be addressed including: school safety, the primary election, special sex offender housing, shoreline management, medical coverage for the disabled who work, and education accountability.

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

Contact your Senators and Representative with the following message:

- Keep the Basic Health Plan intact – no increases in co-payments and no reductions in slots or benefits

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 and House have both passed their versions of the budget. The budget is currently in the Senate for review and concurrence.

The House version of the budget has a very drastic cuts proposed is in the Basic Health Plan and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. The House budget cuts the Basic Health Plan (BHP) by \$103 million, thus eliminating 35,000 slots for low-income individuals and families. The House budget also caps the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides Health Insurance to children of moderate-income working families not covered by their parent’s health insurance; CHIP will not accept new enrollees.

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

Budget Item	Comment	Budget - In Thousands of Dollars *		
		Governor's	Senate	House
Adult Day Health Program	Senate version restores the adult day health program eliminated in the governor's budget. The House budgeted reduces the size of the program	Eliminates program	\$0	(\$2,000)
Adult Dental Program	Restores adult dental program for Medicaid recipients. The House version reduces the size of the program whereas the Governor's version eliminated it entirely	(\$20,358)	\$0	(\$15,000)

Budget Item	Comment	Budget - In Thousands of Dollars *		
		Governor's	Senate	House
Adult Vision	Restores adult vision program for Medicaid recipients which was eliminated in the Governor's budget	(\$4,367)	\$0	\$0
Anti-bullying training in the schools.	Provides 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.)	Included	\$475	\$500
Basic Health Plan - health insurance coverage for low-income working families	There is a large increase in Basic Health Plan co-pays and premiums. The house version also eliminates 35,000 slots.	(\$2,316)	(\$2,223)	(\$103,168)
Breast & Cervical Cancer treatment	\$2.578 million for breast and cervical cancer treatment for low-income women	\$2,578	\$2,578	\$2,578
Child Placing Agency	Child Placing Agency rate increase	\$9,200	\$4,600	\$2,000
Children's Health Insurance Program	Institutes a cap on Children's Health Insurance Program and prevents new enrollments to the program	(\$8,647)	(\$8,647)	(\$8,647)
CHORE services	Senate version restore approximately 1/2 of the governor's proposed cut to the CHORE services program which provides in home services to allow the disabled & elderly to remain in their own homes	(\$3,800)	(\$1,468)	(\$3,800)
College based child care centers	Senate version provides \$5 million in the Capitol budget to expand college based childcare centers	\$0	\$5,000	\$0
Community Services Facilities	Increases money for the Community Services Facilities Program (capitol budget)	?	\$4,186	\$4,225
Dental Sealants for children covered by Medicaid		\$72	\$72	\$72
Emergency Food Assistance	Senate version Includes \$1 million for Emergency Food Assistance Program	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
Fees to support adult basic education	Individuals who are attending a Community College to obtain their GED have their tuition fees waived. Under the Senate version they would be charged \$5.00 per credit hour.	Free	Sets a \$5.00 fee per credit hour for individuals attending Community College to get their GED	Free

Budget Item	Comment	Budget - In Thousands of Dollars *		
		Governor's	Senate	House
Foster Care Caseload reduction	Provides for caseload reductions in the Division of Children & Family Services	\$7,700	\$6,600	\$5,400
Foster Care Recruitment	Provides funds to recruit Foster Care parents for children served by the Division of Children & Family Services	\$400	\$0	\$400
Housing Trust fund	Senate version brings housing Trust Fund up to \$78 million (capitol budget)	(\$13,000)	\$0	(\$10,000)
Kinship placement	Senate version provides \$1.05 million for kinship placements (need is \$8.9 million) for children in foster care	\$0	\$1,050	\$0
Medically Indigent program	The Senate version reduces the governor's \$34 million proposed cut in the Medically Indigent program down to a \$3 million cut, whereas the house version has a \$12 million cut. The medically indigent program pays partial reimbursement to hospitals caring for very sick or badly injured individuals who do not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid. Cuts to the BHP and CHIP funding will increase visits to emergency rooms and add additional burden to the Medically Indigent Program.	(\$34,000)	(\$3,000)	(\$12,000)
Passport Program for foster children	A Passport is a concise record of each foster child's medical, dental, behavioral, psychological, and educational status. It also provides the child's caretaker with a record of vaccinations, allergies, current medications & dosages, and upcoming appointments. Approximately 60% of the children in foster care over 90 days have passports. These additional funds are provided to reduce the backlog.	\$1,167	\$583	\$0
Respite Care funds for foster parents	Respite funds for foster parents at \$2.4 million (total needed is 3.4 million)	\$3,458	\$2,400	\$1,589
Sexual Assault Program Legal Advocates	Provides \$380,000 for sexual assault program legal advocates (total needed for every program to have one is \$1 million)	\$0	\$380	\$0

Budget Item	Comment	Budget - In Thousands of Dollars *		
		Governor's	Senate	House
Ticket to Work	Ticket to Work for folks with developmental and mental health issues. This allows individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health issues to continue receiving Medicaid funding while working.	Included	\$5,200	\$0
Tobacco Prevention Program	Senate version Increases tobacco prevention state plan by \$5 million per year (would be a total of \$17.5 million if enacted).	\$0	\$5,000	\$0
Vendor rate increase	Although the budget gives state employees and teachers a cost of living increase, it provides a lower rate increase for vendors		2.1 % increase on 7/1/2001 & a 2.2% increase on 7/1/2002	2.2 % increase on 7/1/2001 & a 2.5% increase on 7/1/2002
Youth Shelters	Senate version funds overnight youth shelters at \$240,000	\$0	\$240	\$0
<p>*Note: A \$0 amount indicates that there is no increase or decrease in from the 2001 budget</p> <p>A positive increase means that there is a new program or an enhancement to an existing program to cover new programs or additional individuals</p> <p>A negative amount indicates that there is a reduction or elimination of the program</p>				

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 has been heard in the House Appropriations Committee. On April 22nd, the House by Resolution sent the bill back to the Senate Rules committee. Because it is addressed in the Senate and House Budgets, it is still technically alive. Call your Representatives and Senators 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 both the Senate and the House. It has been sent to the Governor for signature. Contact the Governor's office and ask him to sign SSB 5309.

ESSB 5528 - Requiring policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities. (SUPPORT) This bill requires schools to develop policies to prohibit harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities. SSB 5528 has passed out of the Senate and is now in the House Education Committee. ESSB 5528 has had a public hearing in the House Education Committee. On April 22nd the House by Resolution sent ESSB 5528 back to the Senate Rules Committee. Call your representatives and senators, especially leadership and urge them to take action on this important bill - ESSB 5528.