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June 8, 2013

## Budget continues to be topic number one



The special session has **kicked into a higher gear** as we approach June 11, the last day of the 30-day special session allowed under Washington's constitution. Earlier this week, the governor said he would call a second special session immediately if Tuesday comes and goes without a budget agreement. Perhaps that prompted legislators from the House of Representatives to finally get serious about budget negotiations, because **on Wednesday they offered a new spending proposal.**

The good news is that the House majority scaled back its tax plan, as well as the overall level of spending compared to the budget proposal it approved April 12. The bad news is that the House took money away from education **our number one priority**, instead the money is to go to expanding government programs. This is a step back for Washington's children. Our children deserve our first dollar not our last dime.



The House tax increases are not for education, it's to continue growing government. It's not about dollars for students; it's about bucks for bureaucrats. It is essential for the government to live within its means just as all of you do.

More than \$140 million of the cuts in the House proposal are based around a maneuver that pushes responsibilities out into the next biennium. This is not an earnest compromise, it is proposing an accounting scheme, and that is not an accurate representation. It's another example of kicking the can down the road and isn't that one of the reasons why we are in this mess in the first place?

The state is already expected to collect an additional \$2 billion more in the next budget cycle, from the naturally growth of the economy. In spite of this increase in revenue, House Democrats and their allies in the Senate Minority are insisting on raising hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes on our state's families and employers ABOVE that \$2 billion.

The new proposal offered by the House earlier this week totals \$33.7 billion. Their proposal is an improvement over the original House budget, but there are still many important differences between the House and Senate fiscal approaches. **Some of the positive aspects include:**

- House Democrats and the governor have abandoned their attempt to continue the promise-breaking extension of a "temporary" business and occupation tax increase that was enacted in 2010 and is set to expire June 30. This will save state businesses \$534 million over the next two years.
- The new House proposal would no longer rob the state's "rainy day" reserve account.
- The overall spending level in the House budget proposal has decreased by \$810 million.

However there are still negative points to their proposal as well:

- More than 75 percent of the reductions came from education.
- In all, the House budget rewrite would put **\$217 million less towards education** than the plan the Senate approved with bipartisan support during the regular session.
- Much of the House education spending is predicated on **higher taxes, fund shifts** from other accounts or by **pushing appropriations** into the next budget cycle. Accounting games don't solve our budget issues.

In the Senate, I will continue to look for ways to work collaboratively, put an emphasis on providing for education and avoid spending more than the state expects to collect in revenue. We are working hard to come to agreement with the House before the time allotted for the special session runs out, but we will not abandon our principles.

## Meanwhile, back in the 8th District...

While budget negotiations have been ongoing in Olympia, I've been able to get back to the 8th District on several occasions to meet with constituents, businesses and other stakeholders who will be affected by the Legislature's final budget. It's always my highest priority to gauge the public opinion on these issues to help me better represent you in the Senate.

Thank you for all the e-mails and letters you've been sending to my office. I really appreciate the feedback and your interest in state government! If you would like to contact me further you can write, phone, e-mail, or stop by if you're in Olympia.

As always, it remains my honor to serve you in the Washington State Senate.

Sincerely,



**Sharon Brown**  
State Senator  
8th District



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