



November 24, 2020

Honorable Representatives and Senators,

We once again seek your cooperation to convene a special session of the Legislature. The need for legislative action on COVID-19 is urgent and growing. And while we had hoped that you would agree to convene earlier this year—when case rates were lower, social restrictions were more flexible, and budget problems would have been easier to address—we continue to believe that having a special session is the appropriate course of action now.

COVID-19 demands our immediate attention as elected officials. The "one man" approach to state government has failed to control COVID-19 or stanch the economic suffering that continues to unfold across Washington. Case rates are increasing, and the imposition of more regulations by the governor is putting unbearable stress on the people of our state.

As you know, our constitution authorizes us to convene a special session with the agreement of two-thirds of the members of the Legislature. We do not have to wait for the governor.

We have the power to meet and take action to provide relief to the many workers, families, and businesses affected by the new shutdowns—relief that the governor's office cannot and will not provide. But we can only do this if you are willing to work together with us.

Without legislative action, our fellow citizens will have a grim holiday season. One hundred thousand restaurant and hospitality workers are facing job loss because of the governor's new rules. And that is just one example. Workers in retail, fitness, entertainment, the arts, and many other sectors are also losing their jobs without any prospect of relief. It is inexcusable for us to wait while our friends and neighbors are languishing. Designing a solution to this problem is the exclusive responsibility of the Washington State Legislature—not the federal government, and not the governor. It is our job to direct state financial resources and enact state policies to help. The governor has reached the limits of his power. It is far past time for the Legislature to step up.

Our request for a special session is not unusual or unreasonable. Other state legislatures have been meeting with the purpose of providing relief to their residents. In fact, last week Governor Polis of Colorado and legislative leaders announced that there would be a special session in Denver following Thanksgiving with the intent to pass a COVID-19 relief package.

Candidly, it *is* unusual and unreasonable that the Washington State Legislature has not already held a special session to act on COVID-19 relief. The Legislature has had fifty special sessions since it began

meeting on an annual basis in 1980. While these sessions were considered necessary at the time to deal with a variety of different problems, we are perplexed that some of our colleagues appear to believe that the current pandemic is not a sufficient reason to act.

The Legislature should not be stuck on the sidelines while Washingtonians confront a once-in-a-lifetime challenge. We propose holding a special session starting on December 9th and this letter serves to inform the Secretary of the Senate and Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives that we agree to convene.

If you want to meet in special session to work on COVID-19 relief, please provide your electronic signature to the Secretary of the Senate or Chief Clerk by December 1 to express your agreement. We hope to know if there is sufficient support for this effort so members and staff can prepare. Please join us.

Sincerely,

Jenny Graham Keith W. Goehner 

Ed Orcutt Larry Abbott Mike Vohs

Chris Hildon Michelle Caldier Bruce Chandler

CG Tom Dent Juan Herrera

Mary Carolyn Elice Paul Harris

Bill Jenkie Bradley A. Klippert Vicki Kraft

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Bob McCaslin ^{John M. Muckew} Steve Olson

Donna Smith ^{Wendy a. Smith} Chris Smith

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