



Senator Eide's Week in Review – *Sine Die* Edition

December 15, 2011

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This week the Legislature adjourned the special session *sine die*. While we have not yet come to a final budget solution, we continue to make progress on solving our state's \$2 billion shortfall.

Today's *Week in Review* features a section about Federal Way's struggle through the Great Recession, a note about adjournment, a video of some moving testimony in Olympia, a useful tool to navigate state websites, a sensible proposal to streamline and improve the Discover Pass and some good news thanks to our state's job creators.

The ripple effect of the Great Recession

Last week's Federal Way Mirror contained a headline that we should all spend a moment to digest: [Food stamps: Nearly 1 in 4 Federal Way residents seek assistance.](#)

The city made it into the top 10 of regional Washington cities for percentage of total population on food stamps, with 21,286 residents on the program.

More than anything else, our state's current shortfall is a reflection of the struggles that families and businesses continue to have with their own budgets. State revenue collections are tied directly to the activity of families and businesses, and we can't overlook the fact that state government is hurting because they're hurting.

Federal Way isn't alone in feeling the ripple effect of the Great Recession. Other neighboring cities – Tukwila, Kent and Burien each have rates topping 30 percent.

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Adjournment *sine die*

Today's budget agreement and progress marks a down payment and fills a quarter of our projected \$2 billion revenue shortfall.

So, while we have officially adjourned *sine die*, make no mistake – we have much work yet to be done.

As legislators, we have an obligation to balance the budget – and we will.

But we also have an obligation to the Washingtonians who will bear the brunt of this budget to find the best possible solutions we can. The decisions we make in the coming months will decide the quality of education our children receive, who can earn a college degree and which critical health and human services program are to be continued.

The budget package closes \$497.7 through a mix of cuts, fund transfers and policy changes. These are the basic steps on which there is broad agreement, and which can be enacted quickly – not the tough decisions on deep cuts that rightly require thoughtful discussion. Here's the details:

Maintenance Level net change, \$96.5 million. This is mostly accounting for lower-than-expected health care costs in the current biennium.

Policy Level net changes, \$226.4 million. These are actual changes in policy that reduce our costs. Although the actual cuts to service are in this section, there are also accounting changes.

Fund Transfers, \$106.2 million. These are unspent funds and money being moved into the general fund, mostly savings agencies have racked up by tightly managing their budgets.

Unclaimed Property, \$50.6 million. The state would sell unclaimed securities (stocks, bonds) immediately, rather than in three years, reimbursing those that later claim the property with the net proceeds.

Reductions in state work force. Many, if not most, of the full-time equivalent positions eliminated in this plan have been held empty, often in anticipation that anyone hired could be immediately laid off. Nevertheless, every slot eliminated and every position held empty is one less Washingtonian earning a paycheck for their family.

Major impacts:

- 76 FTEs are positions that were assumed, but will not be created if we go ahead with changes to the Involuntary Treatment Act.
- 100 FTEs are eliminated at the Washington State Penitentiary. These are job losses, as the oldest units are today staffed at medium-security levels.

The voices of our budget choices

I want to share the stories of a teen mother and two struggling students who said an alternative high school in Granite Falls helped them keep their lives on track.

It's stories like theirs that show how impactful a public school can be – and how important fully funding public education is to the community at large.

Click below to view:



Connection Benefit Portal can help

People facing severe financial difficulties may be eligible for benefits through the Washington Connection Benefit Portal, a helpful state website that offers one-stop service from a wide range of public agencies. The “Am I Eligible” and “Apply for Benefits” sections make it easy.

After you click on “Am I Eligible,” all you have to do is enter a few key details such as your name, income, number of members in your household and zip code. The website will filter through the federal, state and local resources for you might qualify.

Then click on the “Apply for Benefits” section and fill out a single application that will be submitted to all agencies that offer assistance.

You can [access the website here](#).

Senate looks to improve Discover Pass

The Discover Pass, [created earlier this year](#) to provide funding to keep our state parks open during these tough economic times, is in line for an upgrade that will make it easier for people to use.

In its current form, the [\\$30 pass](#) is assigned to a specific vehicle and cannot be used if someone in the family that purchased the pass wants to travel in a different vehicle. Legislation proposed for the coming session would amend the law to allow transferability between two vehicles. This would apply to anyone who already has a pass as well as new purchasers.

For more information, [click here](#).

Washington adds 12,100 jobs

Nearly every sector hired in the last month, driving a steep drop in the unemployment rate, from 9.1 percent in October to 8.7 percent in November, the state Employment Security Department [reported today](#).

The state added an estimated 12,100 jobs, including in professional and business services, hospitality, construction, transportation, mining and logging, wholesale trade and information.

Since November 2010, Washington has added 44,600 jobs.

But there are still job losses, particularly in the education and government sectors. And even with the net growth, the unemployment rate remains high, with more than 300,000 Washingtonians looking for work.

Visitors during special session:

If you ever travel to Olympia and are from the 30th District, please visit my office: Legislative Building, Room 305. I would love to see you.

Mayor Skip Priest, Federal Way
Jack Bermingham, President, Highline Community College

Sally McClean, Federal Way School District
Rick Heath, David Foucault, Richard Smith, Tara Neider, AREVA
Federal Services
Charlotte Foster, nursing issues
Tom Dezutter, economic development and lodging association
Minus Samuel, social services
Tim Burns, revenue enhancements
Silver Lake Elementary School students, teachers and parents

As always, it is an honor to serve you.

Best,

Tracey Eide

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