



Washington Fire Chiefs Legislative Report

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Interim Update/Session Preview

- The Legislature will be convening in Olympia for Committee Assembly Days on November 19 & 20. Pre-session hearings and work group presentations on interim activities will be made, and session previews from agencies will take place. This is a grand time to meet with legislators to discuss the upcoming session and any legislative action items we may have, as well as to gather signatures for bills to be prefiled for 2016.
- The 2016 Legislative Session will begin January 11 and is scheduled to run for 60 consecutive days. Most legislators (and lobbyists) are hoping to end on-time, with the focus turning quickly to the 2016 elections. Plenty of work will need to be done before that can happen, though, with the need for a Supplemental Operating Budget appearing likely as the Legislature will look to tackle not just the education funding issue, but also the massive costs associated with the year's wildfire season. Similarly, a Supplemental Capital Budget is also on the table, though some legislators are already indicating that a supplemental may not be necessary.
- The legislative musical chairs game has continued past Election Day, with a handful of new members and number of current Representatives and Senators looking at new positions before the 2016 Session and beyond. There will be a significant number of new faces, as well as old faces in new places, in the coming months:
 - Rep. Reuven Carlyle (D-Seattle), most recently the Chair of the House Finance Committee, will likely be joining the State Senate in 2016 to replace Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles in the 36th LD. An official announcement is expected soon.
 - Rep. Kristine Lytton (D-Anacortes) has been named to succeed Rep. Carlyle as Finance Committee Chair. Rep. Lytton was first elected in 2010, has served as Assistant Majority Floor Leader, and currently serves on the Governor's *McCleary* work group. The Finance Committee handles state and local revenues, including tax rates, tax exemptions, and administration of the state's tax code.

- Rep. Ross Hunter (D-Medina), Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, has been appointed to head the Department of Early Learning, effective September 8. Rep. Hunter has been in the House since 2002.
- Rep. Hans Dunshee (D-44, Snohomish County) was chosen by House Democrats to succeed long-time Appropriations Chair Ross Hunter, who resigned to become the director of the state's Department of Early Learning. Rep. Dunshee served one term in House from 1992-1994, and has served continuously since 1996. He has been the long-time chair of the House Capital Budget Committee.
- Rep. Steve Tharinger (D-Dungeness) has been selected to succeed Rep. Dunshee as Chair of the House Capital Budget Committee. Rep. Tharinger, a former Clallam County Commissioner, was first elected to the Legislature in 2010. The Capital Budget Committee reviews requests for public building construction and repair and land acquisitions. It also considers funding to non-profits and local governments that provide housing and other infrastructure needs.
- The King County Council recently selected Clyde Hill attorney Patty Kuderer to fill Ross Hunter's seat as representative of the 48th LD. Kuderer beat out Redmond City Councilmember Kim Allen and Kirkland realtor Santiago Ramos for the spot and will serve the remainder of the Hunter's term, appearing on the ballot during next year's election.
- Senator Pam Roach (R-Auburn) has announced she will be running for Pierce County Council in 2016. If victorious, she has indicated her intention to continue serving in the Senate and to hold both positions at once.
- Senator Bruce Dammeier (R-Puyallup) has announced that he will forego a re-election campaign for his Senate seat and will instead vie for Pierce County Executive in 2016. Sen. Dammeier has served in the Senate since being elected in 2012 following two terms in the House.
- Rep. Hans Zeiger (R-Puyallup) has announced that he will seek the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Dammeier in 2016. Rep. Zeiger has served in the House since being elected in 2010.
- Rep. Chris Reykdal (D-Tumwater) has announced that he will be leaving the Legislature after the 2016 session to run for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2016. He has served in the Legislature for six years.
- Rep. Jim Moeller (D-Vancouver) has announced he will be running for Lieutenant Governor in 2016. Rep. Moeller has served as Speaker Pro Tem in the House.
- Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-Seattle) won her election for King County Council, and will be leaving the Senate seat she has held since 1994.
- Senator Karen Fraser (D-Olympia) has announced her run for Lieutenant Governor in 2016, a post currently held by Democrat Brad Owen since 1996. Senator Fraser has

been in the Legislature for the past 27 years and has most recently served as Democratic Caucus Chair.

- Senator Cyrus Habib (D-Kirkland) has also announced his run for Lieutenant Governor in 2016. Senator Habib was elected to the House in 2012 and the Senate in 2014. He currently serves as Democratic Whip.
- Senator Brian Hatfield (D-Raymond) has resigning from the Legislature to become sector lead for rural economic development, working for Gov. Inslee. Senator Hatfield has served in the Senate since 2006, following a 10-year run in the House of Representatives.
- Rep. Dean Takko (D-Longview) has been appointed to the Senate to succeed Sen. Hatfield. Rep. Takko has been Chair of the House Local Government Committee and has served in the House since 2004.
- Commissioners from the five counties in the 19th LD have selected J.D. Rossetti to replace Rep. Takko in the House. Rossetti has served as Rep. Brian Blake's legislative assistant since 2012 and is a member of the Longview School Board and the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum United Way board.
- Senator Mark Miloscia (R-Federal Way) has announced he will be running for Washington State Auditor in 2016, a position currently held by Troy Kelley (D-Lakewood). Senator Miloscia unsuccessfully ran for Auditor as a Democrat in 2012 after serving several years in the House and before returning to the Legislature in 2014 as a Republican. While no announcement has been made, some expect Rep. Linda Kochmar (R-Federal Way) to seek Senator Miloscia's Senate seat if he is successful in his campaign for Auditor.
- The 30th LD race was finally decided on Election Day, with appointment incumbent Democrat Carol Gregory falling to Republican challenger Teri Hickel in the Federal Way-area race. Hickel held a slight lead in the August primary, and came away with nearly 55% of the vote in the general election. Hickel's election reduces the House Democrats' majority to 50-48.

2016 Top 5 Legislative Issues

- Sustainable Fire/EMS funding (examples)
 - Raise the E.M.S. levy cap to \$.75/\$1000 of A.V.
 - HB 1251 (Van De Wege) remains alive in 2016. It received a hearing in 2015 but did not move from the House Finance Committee.
 - Change fire levy funding to mirror port authorities which are outside the \$10 constitutional limit
 - Draft legislation seeking a Constitutional amendment to this effect is being drafted for informational purposes, though not push is expected in 2016.
 - Simple majority for RFA benefit service charge renewal

- HB 1605 (Peterson) remains alive in 2016. This bill would allow for 10-year or permanent fire benefit charges, as well as make the renewal of FBCs a simple majority. It passed the House in 2015 but failed to move in the Senate.
 - Restructure the 1% Lid Limit
 - The WFC is working closely with other local government partners to further this issue in 2016. It is unlikely a bill will be moved forward unless it is associated with an overall push for levy reform, likely as part of an agreement on the *McCleary* education funding issue.
 - Tax exempt facilities required to enter contract for fire protection
 - The WFC is working closely with the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and local chiefs impacted by reduced contract terms for fire service agreements for state-owned facilities. A draft framework is being developed that could possibly lead to more certainty in future negotiations between state agencies and fire protection entities.
- RFA structural equity with fire districts
 - A redraft of HB 1368 (Reykdal)/SB 5906 (McAuliffe) has been developed that removes the language concerning simple majority for fire benefit charge renewals but that maintains all other provisions concerning structural equity.
- Statewide CBRNE response planning & funding
 - The WFC continues to work with the state and other stakeholders to educate on the need and benefits of a strong CBRNE program. Though no legislation is expected during 2016, efforts are underway to seek funding for an updated study on the scope of a potential program.
- Capital improvements for Fire Training Academy
 - While it is unclear whether a Supplemental Capital Budget will be needed in 2016, a new House Capital Budget chair brings a new possibility of securing additional funding. If a Supplemental Capital Budget is worked during 2016, the WFC will be working with other fire service stakeholders and leaders to see full funding of the much-needed capital investments at the FTA.
- Support recommendations from volunteer recruitment & retention incentives committee (examples include allowing Volunteer FF's to opt into employer medical insurance pool and creating an employer tax credit for volunteer FF response during working hours)
 - The WFC is working with interested partners to further the recommendations from the committee and see positive movement in 2016.

Other Important Legislative Issues in 2016

In addition to the Top 5 issues above, the WFC will be working on a number of other important issues during the 2016 legislative session. Below are some of the issues we expect to see come up in 2016:

- DNR wildfire funding – Supplemental Operating Budget
 - The Dept. of Natural Resources is seeking a significant increase in wildland firefighting funds in a Supplemental Operating Budget in 2016. The WFC supports efforts to increase DNR’s budget in this area.

- Wildland fire mitigation – Ready Set Go! Program
 - An updated version of HB 1127 from 2013 has been developed that would task the Washington State Fire Marshal’s Office with developing and implementing the Ready Set Go! prefire mitigation plan. The bill also calls for the SFMO to identify grant opportunities to assist local jurisdictions in voluntarily implementing the Wildland Urban Interface Code.

- Fireworks regulation
 - In addition to continuing to oppose HB 1702/SB 5914 (Moscoso/Benton) from last session, which seeks to limit the amount of local control a jurisdiction has over regulation of fireworks, the WFC will be supporting a proposal by Rep. Brad Hawkins to expand local authority to issue emergency fireworks bans in instances of extreme fire danger. Current authority is limited to one year advance warning for bans.

- City fire authority
 - HB 1606/SB 5537 (McBride/Habib), seeking to allow the creation of a fire authority within the boundaries of certain regional cities, will be pushed again in 2016 with the WSCFF taking the lead.

- Public records issues
 - The Washington State Auditor’s Office is conducting a survey this fall on the impacts of public records requests on local governments. A final report is due prior to next session beginning, and it is possible that certain legislative efforts may arise from the report’s findings. The WFC supports open and transparent operations, while at the same time preventing public records request abuses and funding agency costs for compliance.

- Banning toxic flame retardants

- Efforts continue to ensure toxic flame retardants are not utilized in Washington State. HB 1174 (Van De Wege) and HB 5056 (Erickson) are both alive for 2016.
- Residential fire sprinklers
 - Efforts are underway with the State Building Code Council to expand residential fire sprinkler requirements to townhomes.
- Rural amphitheater surcharge
 - HB 1009/SB 5000 (Manweller/Parlette), concerning the imposition of a \$1 surcharge on tickets sold at the Gorge Amphitheater to help offset costs to the local fire district and local hospital district, are both alive in 2016.

Other issues will undoubtedly arise over the course of the next few weeks and months.