

Compromise spending plan sails through Washington Legislature

Jim Camden

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How they voted

Here's how Spokane-area legislators voted on the supplemental budget that passed Thursday:

In the House, Republicans Susan Fagan, Joel Kretz, Kevin Parker, Joe Schmick and Shelly Short, and Democrats Timm Ormsby and Marcus Riccelli voted yes. Republicans Leonard Christian, Jeff Holy and Matt Shea voted no.

In the Senate, Republicans Mike Baumgartner, Brian Dandel, Mike Padden, Mark Schoesler and Democrat Andy Billig voted yes.

OLYMPIA – Working with uncommon haste, the Legislature passed a supplemental spending plan for most state programs that raises no taxes, offers no new tax loopholes and provides no state-funded raises for teachers.

Barely six hours after budget negotiators showed the public a compromise spending plan, it passed first the House by an 85-13 vote, then in the Senate on a 48-1 count. Supporters described it as “modest,” “pretty small” and “not perfect by any means.”

It would send an extra \$58 million to public schools around the state for books and supplies. It would spend an extra \$25 million on Opportunity Scholarships

for college students, \$22 million on mental health services and \$4 million to expand prison capacity.

But many who supported it, and some who opposed it, talked about what it didn't do.

It doesn't raise taxes, Senate Ways and Means Chairman Andy Hill, R-Redmond, said. At various times, some Democrats looked at imposing taxes on e-cigarettes, bottled water or retail purchases by out-of-state shoppers.

For the first time in many years, it also doesn't get rid of any taxes, said Sen. Jim Hargrove of Hoquiam, the top Democrat on the Senate budget writing committee. Some Republicans sought to create or extend tax preferences for research and development, for server farms or logging trucks.

“We came to a draw,” Rep. Reuven Carlyle, D-Seattle, said of the dispute over taxes.

There is no cost-of-living adjustment for public school teachers, something that passed the House and Democrats in both chambers said they wanted. The freeze on tuition at state colleges and universities, instituted last year, was continued.

“We’ve stopped balancing the budget on the backs of college students,” said Rep. Kevin Parker, R-Spokane.

But the compromise plan was not without its critics. Rep. Matt Manweller, R-Ellensburg, said the Legislature passed tax incentives for Boeing in a special session last November with a promise to help the rest of the state in 2014. There’s nothing in the budget to keep that promise for rural and Eastern Washington, he said.

“When we use the phrase ‘one Washington,’ it’s got to be more than a catchphrase,” Manweller said. “There’s nothing in this budget for the forgotten Washington.”

The plan is a traditional supplemental budget, legislators said, making small adjustments in the two-year spending plan approved in 2013 after two extensions to that legislative session. It is unlike recent supplemental budgets, which were essentially major rewrites of previous spending plans made inoperable because of plummeting revenue estimates in the recession.

It leaves until next year a major fight over public schools, which the Legislature is under a state Supreme Court mandate to improve. The Legislature will need to come up with at least \$2.2 billion for school programs, and perhaps another \$1 billion for school employee wages, for the 2015-17 biennium to satisfy that court order.

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