

Callaghan: Legislature met its expectations (very low ones)

By PETER CALLAGHAN

The News Tribune
March 16, 2014

I too am sick of contrived winners-and-losers lists that political reporters and columnists produce after sessions of the Legislature. But until such lists are no longer required by the state constitution, we have to keep doing them. It's the law.

WINNERS

Unity: The Senate Majority Coalition Caucus and House Democratic Caucus proved that as long as you really don't expect to pass anything into law, it's a lot easier to keep the troops together. Imagine how disunifying it might have been to adopt a transportation plan, regulate medical marijuana, or fix the teacher and principal evaluation system.

Low expectations: Such expectations are underrated. I mean, if you foster low enough expectations for what you can accomplish, how hard is it to succeed?

Timeliness: Legislators accomplished very little. But at least they did it without needing a special session, so get off their backs.

U.S. Postal Service: Now that Washington lawmakers have decided that failing schools aren't really that big of a deal, nearly every parent will be getting a letter telling them his or her kid's school isn't making adequate progress. And who will get paid to deliver many of those letters?

Retired teachers: Now that Washington lawmakers have decided that failing schools aren't really that big a deal, nearly every district in the state will have to divert millions in federal dollars to outside tutoring for struggling, low-income students. Hang up a shingle and cash in on failure. Ain't capitalism grand?

Washington Supreme Court: Despite threats from Sen. Michael "Sandpounder" Baumgartner to shrink the size of the court for having the audacity to do its constitutional duty, the court will still have nine justices to count how few education dollars were added to the state budget.

Lawyer jokes: How many legislators does it take to approve creation of a branch law school at the University of Washington Tacoma?

Campaign consultants: Since most of what the House Democrats passed and most of what the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus passed was certain to die in the other chamber, why did they go to the trouble? To provide fodder for fundraising letters and campaign hit pieces, of course.

Seattle Seahawks: The team had very little to do with the 2014 session, but our readership goes up anytime we mention the Super Bowl champs. Go Hawks!

Mythical crimes: After seeing Internet rumors about a crime called the Knockout Game in which people allegedly try to sucker punch strangers on the street in hopes of, you know, knocking them out, the Senate tried to make it a felony. Perhaps because no one knows whether such crimes occur in Washington, it died in the House.

LOSERS

World peace: The breakaway region of Washington state again defied federal authority, this time over medical marijuana regulation and education reform. The world now stands by anxiously to see how strongman Barack Obama will respond to rein in the separatists.

Boeing (part 1): Sixty days of session and not a single new tax break? Hello, South Carolina.

Cliché lovers: Gov. Jay Inslee added nary a single spoonerism, aphorism or buzz phrase during the entire session. It's likely just a temporary setback, though, so don't get your knickers in a twist.

Plain talk: Republicans adamantly opposed the Washington state Dream Act. They warmly embraced the Real Hope Act. Try to keep it straight.

Boeing (part 2): The Chicago-based aerospace giant and tax avoider was once the dominant political force in the state. That title has now been claimed by a new juggernaut that gets whatever it wants from the Legislature – medical marijuana patients.

Symbolism: The official state oyster is the Olympia – not the Stellar Bay or the Pacific. The official state waterfall is Palouse Falls, not Snoqualmie Falls or Wallace Falls. But the colors on the official state seal? Any dang thing you want them to be. I hear House Democrats are considering plaid.

Peter Callaghan: 253-597-8657

peter.callaghan@thenewstribune.com

[@CallaghanPeter](#)

Read more here: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2014/03/16/3099803/legislature-met-its-expectations.html#storylink=cpy>