
State Supreme Court finds lawmakers in contempt over education funding

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The Washington State Supreme Court is holding the state Legislature in contempt over its lack of progress on education funding, the court announced on Sept. 11.

The order stems from the *McCleary vs. State* case in 2012, which found that the state was not meeting its duty of fully funding education in the state.

The court said in its order on Thursday that it will hold off on any punishments until after the 2015 session, allowing the state time to work on funding during the upcoming budget session.

"The state has assured the court that education funding is the legislature's top priority and that the legislature is determined to (and the state expects it to) take meaningful action in the 2015 budget session," the court order said.

The order comes after a hearing on Sept. 3 with state lawmakers when the state said again it could not comply with the court's order from January 2014, requiring education to be fully funded in the state.

During the Sept. 3 hearing, legislative officials asked the court to allow it to work on the funding issue during the upcoming session.

According to the order issued by the court, "The state assured the court that a contempt order is not necessary to get the legislature's attention, that school funding is the No. 1 issue on the legislature's agenda, and that the 2015 session will provide the best opportunity to take meaningful action on the matter."

The court responded on Thursday, saying the point of a contempt order is to ensure a lawful order is being carried out.

"When the orders are not followed, contempt is the lawful and proper means of enforcement in the orderly administration of justice," the order said. "It directed the state to provide its detailed plan in December 2012, prior to the 2013 legislative session, and it has repeatedly emphasized that the state is engaged in an ongoing violation of its constitutional duty to K-12 children. The state, moreover, has known for decades that its funding of public education is constitutionally inadequate."

Possible sanctions include fines for the legislature as a whole or individual lawmakers. The order says if by the end of the 2015 session the state has not yet complied, the court will reconvene to impose sanctions and other measures as necessary.

The 2015 Washington Legislative session begins in January.

To read the full copy of the order, visit the [courts website](#).

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