

AG's office asks state's top court to hold off on McCleary sanctions

Originally published April 27, 2015 at 12:41 pm Updated April 27, 2015 at 3:59 pm

The state Attorney General's Office asked the state Supreme Court on Monday to hold off on punishing lawmakers over the lack of a K-12 education-funding plan — at least for now.

By [Joseph O'Sullivan](#)

Seattle Times Olympia bureau

OLYMPIA — The state Attorney General's Office on Monday asked the state Supreme Court to hold off on punishing lawmakers over the lack of a K-12 education funding plan — at least until the Legislature finishes its work for the session.

Justices, [after finding the state in contempt last autumn](#) for not doing enough to fully fund education as required by the court's McCleary decision, called for the update at the end of the legislative session. In the contempt order, justices said they would hold off on punishing the state to see what lawmakers do in the 2015 session.

The regular session ended Friday. A special session is scheduled to begin Wednesday as Democrats and Republicans work to find a compromise on the 2015-17 operating budget.

In [its memo](#), the Attorney General's Office acknowledged that “the Legislature did not complete its work by the close of the regular session.”

“However, there are a number of bills offered in both chambers of the Legislature that are responsive to the Court's orders,” according to the memo.

It then lists [the Democratic and Republican budget bills](#), as well as a series of proposals introduced recently to change the use of local property-tax [levies for education funding](#).

The Attorney General's Office proposed to send another update to the court "after the final special session adjourns and the governor acts on the budget and the pertinent implementing bills the Legislature passes."

The memo's release came shortly after state lawmakers and Gov. Jay Inslee met Monday at the governor's office to discuss how [to break the impasse between Democrats and Republicans over the state's 2015-17 operating budget](#).

"I think we made useful progress today on how we're going to work with each other," said Rep. Ross Hunter, D-Medina, and the chief Democratic budget writer.

The meeting included Hunter and his counterpart, Sen. Andy Hill, R-Redmond, the chief GOP budget writer. A handful of other lawmakers from each party attended, as well as David Schumacher, director of the state Office of Financial Management.

Legislative staffers who showed up for the meeting were turned away so that lawmakers could speak more freely.

"People left with a sense that there's a climate for compromise," said David Postman, communications director for Inslee.

No similar budget meetings are scheduled at this point, according to Postman.

"I think we will see how this goes," he said. "This sort of meeting is useful if things get gummed up."

The talks come as lawmakers wrestle with competing visions on how much to spend on state government and how to fund programs like

education and mental-health services. Democrats have called for a [larger budget with \\$1.5 billion in new revenue](#); Republicans [have proposed](#) a smaller budget without tax increases.

More lawmakers will return Wednesday to start a special session to finish the budget, as well as changes to the recreational-marijuana system and [possibly a statewide transportation package](#), among other things.

Joseph O'Sullivan: 360-236-8268 or josullivan@seattletimes.com. On Twitter [@OlympiaJoe](#)