

State legislature running out of time in special session

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SEATTLE (AP) - As the Washington Legislature heads into the final week of its special session, few are predicting that lawmakers will finish their work by Thursday.

But they do have lots of deadlines pressuring them to finish by the end of June, at the latest.

Here are some:

AVOID A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The new fiscal year begins July 1. If the budget for the next two years hasn't been approved by June 30, the state government may have to shut down some of its operations and furlough thousands of workers. Washington state has never had a government shutdown, but it came close in 1991, 2001 and 2013, when budget talks extended late into June.

COURT WANTS FUNDING FIX FOR SCHOOLS

The Washington Supreme Court won't let lawmakers go home until they've got a plan for fixing the way the state pays for public schools. The Supreme Court ruled in September

that Washington state was in contempt for failing to submit a complete plan for implementing its response to the 2012 McCleary decision. Last month, the Supreme Court gave the Legislature more time to complete its assignment. Lawmakers need to pass a state budget that puts more money into education and make a plan for how they will finish paying off McCleary obligations and fix the state's overreliance on local school levies. If they do not check these items off their to-do list, the Supreme Court has promised to sanction the Legislature.

STATE AGENCIES MUST FINALIZE THEIR BUDGETS

Until lawmakers pass a budget, state agencies do not know how much money they will have to spend.

DISTRICTS MAY NEED TO HIRE TEACHERS

If lawmakers put more money into the state budget to lower class sizes and bring all-day kindergarten to school districts across the state, school districts may need to hire more teachers or move staff members around. May 15 is the traditional day when school districts let their teachers know if they will have a job next year, but they have until June 15 when the Legislature has yet to pass a state budget.

TEACHER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Teacher contracts are being negotiated in 104 school districts. The Washington Education Association says many of those contracts have language that allows them to reopen negotiations based on legislative actions, but it's unlikely negotiations will proceed until school districts have a better idea if the Legislature is going to do anything that affects their ability to negotiate.

ROAD REPAIR SEASON

Crews are out building and repairing roads and bridges across Washington. Without a transportation budget and a construction budget - both of which are stalled along with the state general operating budget - that work will come to a halt on July 1. The state ferry system could also experience a partial shutdown.

FUNDRAISING IS ON HOLD

Lawmakers are not allowed to raise campaign funds while the Legislature is in session. Some plan to spend the off season raising money and campaigning for re-election. As long as they keep meeting to hash out the state budget, they will not be able to do that.