

Senate budget negotiator: No deal on spending level yet

By Rachel La Corte
Associated Press
Komo News
June 8, 2015



OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) - A Senate budget negotiator disputed statements made last week that indicated lawmakers had reached a tentative deal on the size of Washington state's next two-year budget, saying Monday that the announcement was "premature."

Talking with reporters before a Monday afternoon meeting with Gov. Jay Inslee, Republican Sen. John Braun of Centralia, said that talks with House Democrats are still ongoing, and that progress was made over the weekend, but that there's still no agreement on the overall spending level of the budget, tentative or otherwise.

"All sides are working in good faith to try and solve this problem," he said.

Lawmakers are currently in the midst of a second special session as they continue to struggle with writing a two-year operating budget that puts more money in the state's education system, as ordered by the state Supreme Court.

On Friday, David Schumacher, Gov. Jay Inslee's budget director, had said lawmakers moved past the first hurdle of determining how big the budget should be and, assuming they got sign off from their colleagues, could move on to negotiating individual sticking points within the budget.

Schumacher wouldn't say what the number was, other than it was "about halfway between" their previous proposals. The most recent House proposal was about \$38.5 billion budget compared to the Senate's \$37.9 billion plan.

Schumacher's statements came after Republican Sen. Andy Hill and Democratic Rep. Ross Hunter - the two key budget writers - met with Inslee. But Braun said that no tentative agreement was made at that meeting.

"There was a lot of discussion about trying to get to an agreement but we never actually reached an agreement," he said. "So I think that was a premature announcement."

Inslee spokesman David Postman wouldn't say whether Schumacher spoke out of turn or too soon.

"We're not going to characterize the status of anything right now," he said.

Officials from the governor's budget office have already released a contingency plan on what state offices may have to close completely if a budget isn't signed into law before July 1, when the current two-year budget ends.