

# **EYE ON OLYMPIA: Most legislators get a week off while some stay in Olympia to strive for compromise**

By James Casey  
Peninsula Daily News  
June 15, 2015

OLYMPIA — So you think all your legislators are in the capital hammering out a budget compromise that will fund education, operations, transportation and infrastructure improvements?

Wrong.

Most of them are back in their home districts today, foregoing the \$110 per day they'd otherwise receive for being in Olympia.

“Next week, we're not scheduled to be on the floor,” state Rep. Steve Tharinger of Sequim said late last week.

Tharinger, Rep. Kevin Van de Wege of Sequim and Sen. Jim Hargrove of Hoquiam represent the 24th Legislative District. It encompasses all of Clallam and Jefferson counties and most of Grays Harbor County.

Not that the Capitol's halls are empty this week.

Legislative leaders are trying to break the impasse between the Democrat-controlled House and the Republican-led Senate.

Hargrove is among them.

“All I can tell you is that we're all working hard trying to get this thing done,” he said late Friday, indicating he'd work during the weekend at the task.

The full Legislature is set to reconvene Monday, June 22, nearly the last week of its second consecutive 30-day special session.

That will give them nine days to avert a shutdown of state government that will begin July 1 if Gov. Jay Inslee has no budget to sign.

Inslee already has directed the heads of state departments to determine what state services will end immediately should that happen.

When lawmakers return, Tharinger said, “we'll get on the floor and try to get it all done.”

That will be a tall order even if Republicans and Democrats bridge the \$300 million gap

between the House and Senate budgets.

Each chamber must approve the other's appropriations, then rivet together the legal boilerplate that will turn the numbers into actual revenue and spending.

Still in play are Hargrove's bill that would raise the capital gains tax by one-tenth of 1 percent, which he said 7,500 Washington residents would pay.

Also on the table is Tharinger's proposal to lift the Business and Occupation tax from many startup businesses but raise it for established enterprises.

However, he said, "I think it's pretty remote something will happen." Tharinger said. "It's fairly complex, so it'll take a little more work."

Should they send a budget to Inslee, legislators will have 15 days after they declare sine die — the formal end to the session — to convince the state Supreme Court they've made progress on fulfilling the dictates of the McCleary decision.

That decision — named for Stephanie McCleary, Chimacum schools' human resources director and a Sequim native, who was the lawsuit's chief plaintiff — said the state must fund basic education, now mostly supported by local tax levies, by 2012.

Last fall, Supreme Court justices found legislators in contempt for their failure to meet their order and gave them until the end of the current legislative session to show progress or face sanctions.

The court — an independent branch of state government — hasn't indicated what punishment it might impose on the Legislature — a separate branch — nor have legislators speculated on possible penalties.

---

Reporter James Casey can be reached at 360-452-2345, ext. 5074, or at [jcasey@peninsuladailynews.com](mailto:jcasey@peninsuladailynews.com).

---

All materials Copyright © 2015 Black Press Ltd./Sound Publishing Inc.