

Capitol News

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Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

WSLHA has had a successful week! Our priority bill, [SB 6157](#) (prior authorization), made it passed today's policy committee cutoff and is now in the House Rules Committee. WSLHA is now working to get this bill out of the Rules Committee and scheduled for a vote by the House. It must be voted on by next Friday.

Lawmakers have less than two weeks to go in the legislative session and there's still much to do. Cutoff deadlines are happening very quickly, with today's policy committee cutoff and Monday's fiscal committee cutoff shortening the list of bills in play even more. Bills must pass the opposite house (House bills out of the Senate; Senate bills out of the House) by March 2nd. The legislative session is scheduled to end on March 8th.

This week, the House and Senate Democrats released their budgets. These budgets take a different approach to the Supreme Court's directive to fully fund K-12 education this year, which is an additional one billion dollars this year. The Senate includes this funding in its budget, the bulk of which goes to educator salaries and special education. There is also funding to provide a temporary state property tax decrease in 2019. The House does not include this K-12 funding for educator salaries; it does include funding for special education. It also funds a temporary two-year property tax decrease. The House Democrats also propose a seven percent capital gains tax on investment income to be used for further property tax decreases.

Both the House and Senate budgets provide funding to restore the hearing aid benefit for Medicaid-eligible adults. This will provide hearing aids to an estimated 6,300 adults with hearing loss. Coverage would begin on January 1, 2019.

The House and Senate are expected to pass their budgets today; then negotiations between the House and Senate will begin to negotiate a final budget, hopefully in time to adjourn on March 8th.