

Capitol News Special Session Report

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We are approaching the final days of the first special session, with little legislative action to show for it. There simply has been no reason to call rank-and-file House and Senate members back to the Capitol. There has been little action on the operating budget negotiations as well. The exception, however, is in the area of K-12 funding. Key legislators have been meeting regularly during this first special session to negotiate state funding for K-12 education. Of course, those negotiations can only go so far without the operating budget negotiations happening as well.

There has been action in the Governor's office, with Governor Inslee finishing his executive action on bills passed by the Legislature during the regular session. Out of the over 2100 bills introduced, he signed 339 into law.

The question now is, when will Governor Inslee call legislators back for a second 30-day special session? Will he call them back immediately on May 24th, or wait until June 1st? Legislators must have a budget to the Governor by June 30th to avoid a government shutdown. If Governor Inslee waits until June 1st, a third special session could be avoided.

Another important date is June 20th, when the state revenue forecast will be released. Early speculation ranged from this revenue forecast being a very positive one, with an additional several hundred million dollars expected, to a very negative one. Current expectations are now predicting a flat forecast, with neither huge revenue gains nor losses.

As we look to the second special session, WSLHA remains committed to establishing years of service parity for our school-based SLPs and audiologists. WSLHA joined the Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA), the Physical Therapy Association of Washington (PTWA), and the School Nurse Organization of Washington (SNOW) in a letter to key budget writers, asking for their support for years of service parity. Now we need you to contact your legislators! You should be receiving a call-to-action from us on this topic. **Please answer this call-to-action! We must keep this issue in front of legislators as they negotiate the state's budget.**

WSLHA will also be watching HB 2143, the bill that expands the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship to students in advanced degree programs in health care fields. This bill remains in play during the special session(s).