Capitol News

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# Last Week’s Highlights

Week 12 of this 15-week session was devoted to fiscal issues. The House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Ways & Means Committee worked long days to meet the fiscal committee deadline on Friday, April 2nd. Both chambers will continue floor action for the next two weeks, in anticipation of the April 11th Opposite House Floor Cutoff. After that, the House and Senate will take up concurrence issues before the April 25th adjournment.

**Budget votes.** The House and Senate passed their respective budgets this week (the House is voting on their budget this afternoon), teeing up the negotiations between the two chambers in the next three weeks. Both budgets include some appropriations of the federal ARPA funding. However, they also set aside a significant amount of that funding in order to do a deeper dive into how to appropriate those dollars. We can expect to see more of the ARPA funding allocated in the final budget.

Now that the House budget includes the **budget proviso funding an actuarial study of the bill mandating insurance coverage for children’s hearing aid**s, WSLHA will work to ensure that this proviso is included in the final negotiated budget.

**State of Emergency.** In a letter this week, 23 Republican House and Senate members asked legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle for help in terminating Governor Jay Inslee’s state of emergency before the 2021 session ends on April 25th. Several bills seeking to curtail the governor’s emergency powers have been introduced this session, but they made little progress. Earlier this year, the House and Senate both agreed to extend more than two dozen COVID-related emergency proclamations indefinitely, until the state of emergency ends.

**Wealth Tax.** The House Finance Committee passed HB 1406, the wealth tax bill, on Wednesday. The original bill established a 1% wealth tax on intangible financial assets of more than $1 billion and deposited this revenue into the state’s general fund. It was amended in committee to provide a framework for determining the amount of tax due for an individual who dies before December 31st of the tax year. It also deposits the revenue into the Washington Tax Justice and Equity Fund created in the amendment. It was referred to the Appropriations Committee.

# Priority Bill Updates

* **HB 1196**, the bill that creates reimbursement parity for **audio-only consultations**, passed the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Friday. It was amended to clarify that this bill does not alter the Health Care Authority's responsibility to report potential Medicaid fraud to the Attorney General's Office.
* **SB 5169,** the bill providing **reimbursement** to health care providers for the cost of **PPE** when treating patients in person, is now on the House second reading calendar.
* **SB 5229,** the legislation that creates a **health equity continuing education** requirement for health care providers, has **passed the House**. It now must return to the Senate for a vote to concur in the House amendment.
* **SB 5284,** the bill **eliminating subminimum wage** certificates for people with disabilities after July 31, 2023, is now on the Senate second reading calendar.

# This Week’s Events

This week, it’s back to full-time floor action for the House and Senate to meet the opposite house cutoff on April 11th. In addition, budget negotiations will begin in earnest between the House and Senate. The Legislature is scheduled to adjourn on April 25th.