



Legislative Update

October 2015

While the hangover from the 2015 legislative session and its record-setting duration is still impacting most legislators, lobbyists and staff, preparations are beginning for the 2016 legislative session. Groups are drafting legislative agendas, bills are being drafted and vetted, and legislative committees are holding work sessions.

Several legislators are leaving Olympia: Representative Hunter left the Legislature and his House Appropriations Chair, and Senator Hatfield left his Senate seat. Senator Kohl-Welles is expected to join the King County Council and Representative Carlyle is running to replace her in the Senate. Consequently, Representative Hans Dunshee has been chosen to replace Representative Hunter as the Appropriations Chair; Representative Tharinger was appointed to replace Representative Dunshee as the Capital Budget Chair; Representative Lytton was selected to replace Representative Carlyle as the Finance Committee Chair, and we are waiting for the announcement of who will replace Representative Takko as Local Government Chair when he moves to the Senate to replace Senator Hatfield. Next session will certainly have a new feel in the House.

The Senate will see a few new faces as well with Representatives Carlyle and Takko expected to join their ranks, but the committee chairs are expected to be the same. Senators Dammeier and Roach are contemplating runs for Pierce County office during the 2016 election cycle. Consequently, Representative Zieger has announced his intention to run for the Senate seat currently occupied by Senator Dammeier.

The 2016 legislative session is expected to be marginally productive. It is a 60 day session proceeding a major election cycle. During the 2015 session, they passed a biennial budget, passed a transportation funding package, addressed the harmonization between medical and recreational marijuana, and addressed a large mental health funding crisis. Hence, few expect any large initiatives in the 2016 session. The K-12/basic education funding dilemma still hangs over the Legislature, and anything with a major price tag will be shelved since there are not any tax votes to be found in Olympia in 2016. It will be a session of marginal gains, and posturing for the coming election.