

In This Issue: 2013 Session Concludes

About TWIO

This Week in Olympia is emailed to active WASA and AEA members each Friday during the Legislative Session and is posted on WASA's website at www.wasa-oly.org/TWIO.

NOTE: WASA staff is currently preparing our annual End of Session report. It will contain full details of the 2013 Operating Budget and the 2013 Capital Budget, along with a comprehensive review of the many education-related bills the Legislature addressed this session. It will be emailed to all TWIO subscribers as soon as it is completed.

FINAL SINE DIE EDITION

Giving new meaning to the phrase “a day late and a dollar short,” the Legislature finally adopted a 2013–15 Operating Budget on June 28—Day 152 of the 2013 Legislature. The budget was adopted less than three days before the end of the state’s fiscal year (arriving at midnight, June 30), narrowly avoiding a first-ever, partial shutdown of state government. Due to collective bargaining agreements and federal rules, however, notice of potential state employee layoffs and the potential stoppage of various government assistance programs had already been sent to tens of thousands of people. Governor Inslee signed the budget last night (June 30), officially ending the threat of a government shutdown.

The final, compromise version of the 2013–15 Operating Budget (**3ESSB 5034**) was overwhelming approved by both the Senate and House, receiving a large, bi-partisan majority. In the Senate, there were only four dissenting votes (44–4) and only eleven “no” votes in the House (81–11). Legislators applauded loudly and enthusiastically when the budget was adopted by each house.

It took legislators two overtime sessions and the threat of an embarrassing government shutdown to finally reach consensus on a budget—certainly, at least “a day late.” And that “dollar short?” Legislators in all four caucuses (and the governor) surely went home with strained shoulders as they vigorously gave themselves congratulatory pats on their own backs for adopting an “education first” budget that provided a \$1.0 billion down payment for *McCleary*. First, the accounting of the full \$1.0 billion is questionable. Second, even if the billion dollars is “real,” it falls well-short of the \$1.4 billion recommendation from the Legislature’s own Joint Task Force on Education Funding. The funding is even farther from the additional billions of dollars the state claimed would be funneled to basic education in testimony to the Court during the *McCleary* trial. Certainly, this is at least “a dollar short.”

WASA staff is preparing our annual *End of Session* report, which will be e-mailed to all TWIO subscribers as soon as it is completed. Among other things, it will include comprehensive details of the K–12 portion of the 2013–15 Operating Budget. For quicker information, please see the **June 28 Special Edition of TWIO**. You can also access the actual budget bill, a full agency detail and a summary of the final budget from the **Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program (LEAP) Committee website**.

Education Policy

The Operating Budget was the central focus during the Legislature’s two Special Sessions (and should have been for the 105 days of its Regular Session); however, policy issues were not completely forgotten. As we had anticipated all session, education “reform” bills

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(along with a laundry list of other “reform” bills) from the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus were used as bargaining chips in the budget process, starting late in the Regular Session and throughout most of the two Special Sessions. When positive revenue and caseload forecasts were released on June 18, moving the Senate and House budget proposals closer together, the Senate Majority publicly acknowledged that they would drop their demand for policy issues—if the House dropped its demands for tax increases and the elimination of tax loopholes. By this time, the list of priority bills had been reduced to a small handful. Included were two education issues of importance: **SB 5242**, providing school principals with veto-authority over staffing assignments, known as “mutual consent;” and **SB 5895** capping non-education spending for three biennia, 2015–2023. Shortly after, word on the street was that these and other policy issues were back on the table and in-play. Ultimately, the bills were dropped—with the understanding that Senators will work the issues over the interim and they will be back next session.

For the most part, other major education “reform” and/or “accountability” issues were unsuccessful this session. **SB 5329** was adopted to provide assistance to the state’s lowest performing schools. The bill was drastically altered (positively) before it was adopted. Introduced as a state takeover bill, it was ultimately adopted as a bill to assist struggling schools. A second accountability bill, **SB 5491**, establishes statewide indicators of educational system health. The State Board of Education and OSPI must establish performance goals; however, in setting the goals, consideration must be given to the Legislature’s investment toward fully funding basic education and other funding issues. In other words, while school districts are being held accountable, whether or not the Legislature is following through on its obligations must be taken into account. A third bill, **SB 5946**, was introduced late in the First Special Session and was ultimately adopted alongside the budget in the waning hours of the Second Special Session.

SB 5946 is an omnibus education reform bill that combines several other issues which were introduced earlier in the session, including: third grade reading (**SB 5237**); revisions to the Learning Assistance Program (**SB 5330**); student suspensions/expulsions (**SB 5244**); implementation of a teacher mentor program (SB 5330); and revisions to the Alternative Learning Experience program (**SB 5794**). Key legislators in all four caucuses hammered out compromises on each of these issues and they were dramatically (and positively) altered from the original bills. The original version of the bill also included a focus on professional development and would have required WSSDA to provide training for first-time school directors and first-time superintendents. This was removed prior to final adoption. Language was also included which would have prohibited school districts from providing additional compensation, beyond an inflationary factor, to teachers unless the compensation was explicitly tied to professional development. This TRI “cap” (similar to provisions in SB 5330 and **SB 5901**) was removed prior to final adoption.

WASA’s *End of Session* report will include full descriptions of education-related bills that were adopted by this Legislature, as well as a review of the many education-related bills that were introduced but ultimately failed to be adopted.

Next Steps

Advocacy is a year-round effort and the end of the Legislative Session should not mean the end of school administrators’ advocacy activities. Continue to maintain contact with your elected officials and build your relationships with them. As your districts’ budgets are completed, explain to legislators what obstacles you continue to face. Many of them do not understand your frustrations—and many of them will be perplexed why a billion dollar increase in basic education funding hasn’t solved your problems.

With the 2012–13 school year ended, the focus will turn to the 2013–14 school year. NOW is the time to begin planning activities during November’s Focus on Education month. Use

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this as an opportunity to showcase your schools' and your students' successes to the community—and your legislators. Consult with colleagues in your region and/or visit WASA's [Focus on Education webpage](#) for ideas about how to make this a successful event or series of events.

The journey toward 2018, the Legislature's deadline for full compliance with the paramount duty (and fulfillment of the Supreme Court's Orders), will be an arduous one. It was difficult to achieve the \$1.0 billion *McCleary* down payment, but that will pale in comparison to the effort needed to continue up an even steeper ramp. School administrators must remain vigilant—and ramp up their advocacy activities. The 2014 Legislative Session is just six months away—and it's never too early to plan ahead.

Thank you for your efforts during the 2013 Legislative Session(s); you made a difference.



Dan Steele, Government Relations dstele@wasa-oly.org
Washington Association of School Administrators 825 Fifth Ave SE | Olympia, WA 98501
P: 800.859.9272 360.489.3642 | F: 360.352.2043 | www.wasa-oly.org