



# The Weekly Page

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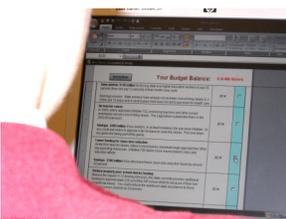
## Pages Learn About Legislature



### Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

### Wealth, income, ...and budgets



Focusing on fiscal issues during the week, House and Senate pages learned about how wealth is distributed in the United States, how wealth differs from income, and what it means to live within a budget...for both citizens and their

government. Students took part in a “bean counting” activity

where they became members of lower, middle or higher economic classes and were given beans to signify their wealth. Then, they had to give up beans to pay income tax, sales tax, rent/mortgage, utilities, food and other necessities. It became clear by the end of the simulation that there was very little discretionary income left for some people. Finally, students used an electronic version of the “Ax and Tax” game to decide on real life cuts and/or revenues that faced legislators in 2009 in order to try to

balance a budget with a \$6 billion deficit. In the culminating Thursday activity, students met as members of a mock Ways and Means committee to prioritize

and decide on a final balanced budget. (see results, back page)



## Cut-off week moves bills closer to becoming laws

This week pages spent a lot of time on the floor of either the House of Representatives or the Senate delivering amendments or other documents to legislators who were under pressure to get bills passed in order to send them to the opposite chamber. Pages got a first-hand look at how parliamentary procedure is used by legislators as they considered remaining bills. Hundreds of bills were introduced in the two chambers, but only about 15-20 percent will actually make it through the entire lawmaking process. In addition to handing out documents, pages were busy listening to their legislators express their views and watching the voting process. For the remainder of the session, all bills will be transferred to the opposing chamber for hearings and deliberation. Bills which make it out of the second chamber will be sent to the Governor for her approval. The session is scheduled to end by March 11.



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## Senators want cuts

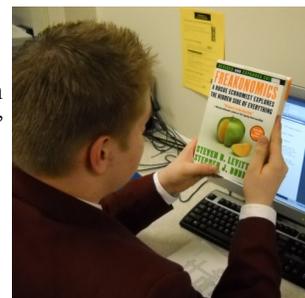
Olympia—Yesterday the Senate Ways and Means committee convened to hear suggested remedies for the current budget deficit and finalize the package it recommends for a floor vote. Senator **Jack Makin** proposed cutting health care coverage for undocumented immigrant children. This cut would save \$61 million per year. “This is a wise cut because tax payers should not have to subsidize health care for somebody who isn’t even a citizen,” said Sen. Makin. Others thought more equitable cuts were needed. Senators **Sarah Matthews, Dean Beal and Josiah Malychewski** proposed cutting overall state government. This cut would save \$200 million to \$3.5 billion. “This is a wise cut because the government should be the leading example of belt tightening for the people,” said Sen. Matthews, who proposed a 1 percent cut. Sen. Malychewski advocated a deeper cut of 5



percent. “While there will be job losses, many of these people will be rehired in a few years,” he said. Making the most drastic cuts was Sen. Beal, who felt a 17.5 percent cut was justified. Senator **Benjamin Baxter** proposed cutting funding for noxious weeds. This cut would save \$2 million. “This is a wise cut because the government should not be in the herbicide business; that was not one of the powers given to the government under the constitution. Second, this is a beneficial cut that won’t harm the citizens of Washington state,” said Sen. Baxter. One interesting proposal for balancing the budget came from Senator **Peter Hunter**. The measure calls for eliminating funding for tourism marketing. If passed, it will save \$4.2 million. “We had to make some hard choices,” said Sen. Hunter. “Our plan is the best solution to our fiscal crisis because it will cut wasteful spending.” Senator **David Rowland** proposed cutting 13 state parks that are neglected. This cut would save \$3.3 million. “This makes sense because if we get rid of lower priority state parks, we can focus on necessities and not wants,” said Sen. Rowland. Another idea for balancing the budget, proposed by Senator **Kaden Sanne**, calls for eliminating the poison control center. If approved, his plan will reduce the current deficit by \$2 million. Senator **Jacquelyn Wolfe** proposed cutting the spending of the goods and services by one-fourth. This cut would save \$200 million. “This is a wise cut because we can conserve more trees and cut back on paper problems,” said Sen. Wolfe. Senator **Eamonn Clarke** proposed cutting the State Film Office. This cut would save \$500,000. “This is a wise cut because, in a time when people are trying to save money, attracting Hollywood producers to Washington State should be among the last of our priorities,” said Sen. Clarke.



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## House members feel cuts are only way to balance budget

Olympia—On Thursday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from several members trying to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall. Representative



**Stephanie Logan** proposed cutting spending on goods and services. This cut would save \$200 million. “This is a wise cut because in bad economic times, everyone has to sacrifice. The government is not exempt from this,” said Rep. Logan. Representative **Bradley Warren** proposed cutting the film office. “We do not need a

film office and this would save us upwards of \$500,000. Why should taxpayers pay for Hollywood movie producers to come to Washington to make movies? We do not need it!” said Rep. Warren. **Representative Micah Murphy** proposed cutting state government programs by 5 percent. “This is a wise move because it will not cause any drastic cutbacks, but will save as much as \$1 billion. The cuts will likely reduce dependency on state government which will help us avoid a future budget crisis,” said Rep. Murphy. Representative **Grace Bell** proposed cutting funding for the eradication of noxious weeds. This cut would save \$2 million. “This is a wise cut because the government shouldn’t be paying for the removal of noxious weeds, especially if it is on private property. Citizens should take responsibility and pay someone to remove these weeds from their homes and surrounding areas,” said Rep. Bell. Representative **Keaton Cruver** proposed postponing teacher raises. This cut would save \$123 million. “Public school teachers are making way too much for their job as a teacher,” said Rep. Cruver. Representative **Shannon Iverson** also had a suggestion to reduce spending for education. She proposed cutting class size funding. This cut would save \$180



million. “This is a wise cut because even though it would be nice to have small classes, we could get along with a few more students in class. Representative **Isaiah Marron** proposed cutting property taxes. “Although this cut would add \$620 million to the deficit, it is a wise cut because we need to reduce the burden on taxpayers; this will stimulate the economy immedi-

ately because people will have more money to spend,” said Rep. Marron. Representative **Ryan Thomas** proposed capping tort claims against the state. “In recent years the state has been forced to pay huge damage claims. By capping the amount to \$1-2 million, we could save \$40 million,” said Rep. Thomas.

## Taxes a necessary evil, say senators

Olympia—Senators met yesterday with the Ways and Means Committee to try to solve the budget deficit problem. One idea for balancing the budget, proposed by Senators **Brian Bruzzo** and **Ryan Doenges**, calls for an income tax. If approved, their plan will reduce the current deficit



by \$4.9 –9 billion, depending on the system used. “This is the most prudent choice. The reasons are simple: the tax is a fair way to spread the burden we have and, as a progressive tax, it will require those with more to contribute more,” said Sen. Doenges. Senators **Peter Biethan** and **Zachery Linville** proposed a soda tax of five cents per can or bottle. “It is needed to preserve essential programs. It will bring in \$277 million,” said Sen. Linville. “It’s a good tax because, first of all, soft drinks are not a necessity. They are a luxury. and an unhealthy luxury at that. By taxing people for sodas, hopefully, not only will Washington make more income, but with luck people will be just a little more healthy in our state,” said Sen. Biethan. Senators **Amanda Erickson** and **Colton Ruegsegger** proposed a one cent per ounce tax on bottled water, which would bring in \$365 million of much needed revenue, according to the senators. “This tax is



needed to preserve essential programs,” said Sen. Erickson, “It’s a good tax because bottled water is an item that people will still want to use, even though they are paying an extra 12 cents for the bottle,” said Sen. Erickson. Senator **Mia Portuese** suggested an increase in the sales tax to 7.5 percent, an increase of one percent. “It’s a good tax because upper-income buyers will be able to afford the increase and lower



-income buyers will only slightly be affected. It will bring in \$2.3 billion,” she said.

After hours of negotiating, Senator **Taylor Christianson**, thinks her plan will go a long way towards balancing the budget. The measure calls for 50 cent tax to be added to the purchase of cigarettes. “This plan is going to work because so many people are addicted to smoking and it is hard to quit , therefore a large amount of money will be brought in,” said Sen. Christianson.

### House calls for some taxes

Olympia—Several ideas for raising taxes were proposed yesterday in the House Ways and Means committee meeting, where the supplemental budget was finalized. After hours of negotiating, Representative **Jonathan Koch**, thinks his committee’s plan will go a long way towards balancing the budget. The measure calls for an increase in property taxes. “This plan is going to work because increasing property tax by one dollar per thousand could bring in \$1.9 billion. The tax will be in place for only two years, so that it would only temporarily affect Washington citizens. This would not affect the lower income population as much as the high income population, because those with more would pay more. They can afford it,” said Rep. Koch. Representatives **Kate Hawk** and **Peri Countryman** proposed a state income tax. “This tax is needed to preserve essential programs,” said Rep. Countryman. “It’s a good option because the rich will pay more and the poor will pay less. It will bring in \$4.9 billion of much needed revenue.” After hours of negotiating, Repre-

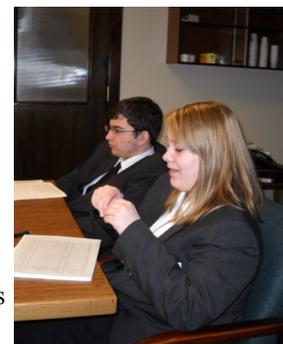


sentatives **Mike Yunkers, Dylan Tack, Alison Anderson and Meagan Meyers**, think their caucus’ plan will go a long way towards balancing the budget. The measure calls for a penny per liter tax on bottled water. “We had to make some hard choices. Our plan is the best solution to our fiscal crisis,” said Rep. Tack. “This plan is going to work because bottled water uses a lot of resources that are getting scarce. This is not that drastic of a tax, and it will get us that much closer to balancing our budget,” said Rep. Meyers. “This tax is needed to preserve essential programs,” said Rep. Yunker, “It’s a good tax because it’s only adding 12 cents for your average bottle of water. The



cost for a bottle of water would still be fairly close to the same as before. And, with people trying to drink healthier drinks these days, they would still be more than willing to purchase bottled water. It will bring in \$365

million of much needed revenue. Representatives **Amanda Carpenter, Melissa Estabrook and Meghan McCallum** proposed a 50 cent increase in the cigarette tax. “It’s a good suggestion because people buy a lot of cigarettes,” said Rep. McCallum. It will bring in \$106 million. “It’s a good tax because increasing the price in cigarettes could limit some smokers, which would benefit the government by saving money on health care in the long run,” said Rep. Carpenter. Representative **Alexandra Pollard** proposed a \$2 tax on all hard liquor. “This tax is needed to preserve essential programs,” said Rep. Pollard. “It’s a good tax because it will reduce the amount of DUIs in the state. It will bring in \$118 million. A final suggestion from Representative **Riley McGannon** was to tax soda five cents per can/bottle. “This will bring in \$277. While I agree that food should not be taxed,” he said, “soda pop is not nutritious, is not a food, and should be taxed.”



### Guest speakers visit Page School

Rep. Hans Dunshee (D-44th); Mary Fairhurst, State Supreme Court Justice; and Shankar Narayan, Legislative Director for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs, the political process, and current legislative issues. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.



### Competitive edge results in Jeopardy win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

### Page program 109 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Today, there duties are a bit more professional. Pages are an integral part of the workings of the legislature, delivering important bills, messages, and sometimes a legislator's lunch!



### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>

This newsletter has been posted there.

### Mock House/Senate Page School Budget Proposal\*

Proposals	Savings/Revenues (in
Bottled water tax – 1 cent per oz.	\$ 365.0
50 cent increase on cigarette tax	106.0
Create state income tax, graduated (cut sales tax in half)	2,900.0
5 cent tax on each 12 oz bottle/can soda	277.0
Add sales tax to gum/candy	59.0
Add \$1/liter tax to liquor	59.0
Cut state government across the board by 1 percent (or 17 percent = \$3.5 B)	200.0
Deport illegal immigrant offenders	9.0
Close state film office	.5
Remove tax exemptions on beauty services, sports lessons, baked goods, etc.	265.0
Close 13 state parks	3.3
Accept federal stimulus money	2,500.0
Cut government goods/services by ¼	200.0
Cut personal bodyguards of Governor/Lt. Governor by 50 percent	1.3
Close regional offices of Dept. of Fish and Wildlife	1.7
Cut program for removal of noxious weeds	2.0
Cut healthcare for undocumented illegal children	61.0
Cap tort claims against the state at \$1-2 million	40.0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,049.8</b>

\*Students used data from 2009; deficit based on a \$6.06 billion prediction.

