



COUNTY & CITY EMPLOYEE

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Scholarship applications due March 15

This year Council 2 is offering six scholarship awards of \$5,000 each, six awards of \$2,000 each and a four-year award of \$5,000 a year (totalling \$20,000) to be given annually.

An applicant must be a graduating senior or a high school graduate and a child or legal guardian of a Council 2 member.

In addition, the union is offering three continuing education awards of \$1,000 each.

Applicants must be members in good standing of a local union affiliated with the Washington State Council of County and City Employees.

Application forms are available from Council 2 offices, by calling 1-800-775-6418, and can be downloaded from the Council 2 Web site — www.council2.com.

The deadline for all applications is March 15, 2010.

AFSCME convention slated for end of June

The AFSCME 2010 International Convention will be held in Boston from Monday, June 28 to Friday July 2.

A number of delegates from Council 2 will attend the convention.

If you are interested in attending, consult your staff representative or call Council 2 at 1-800-775-6418.

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Getting your message through to your legislator

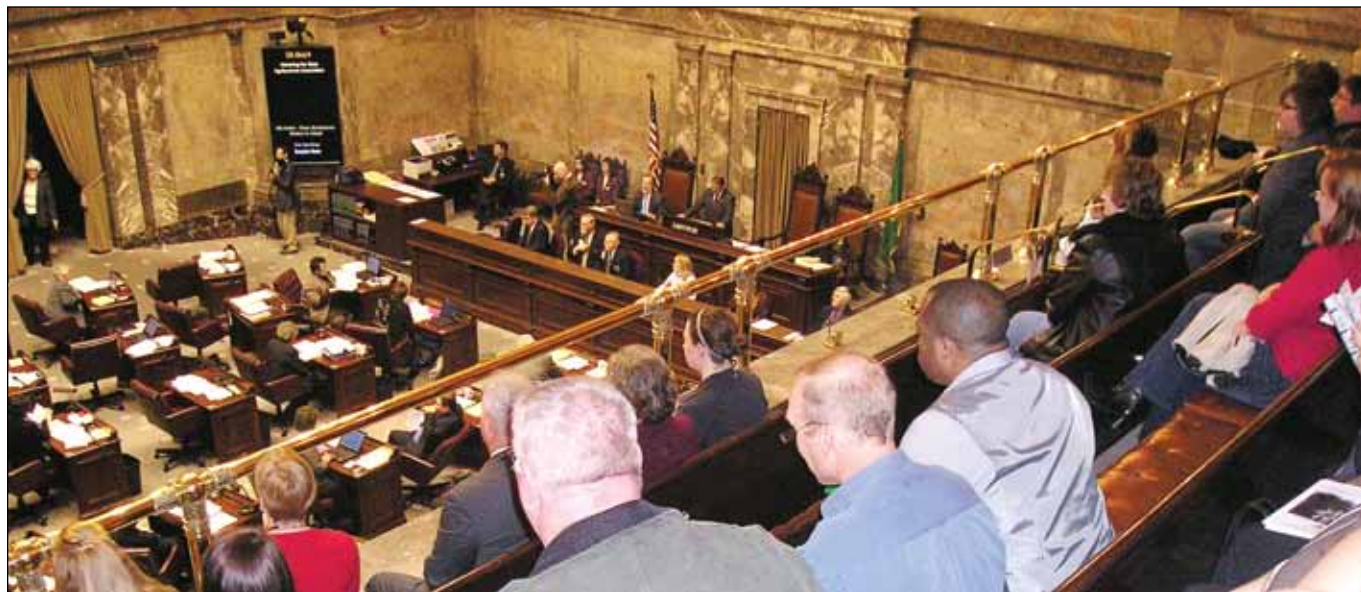
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Local coat drive helps those in need

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We're looking to the Legislature to approve measures aimed at ...

SAVING JOBS AND SERVICES



Council 2 members watch the Washington State Senate in session during the recent Legislative Week-end. Members are hoping the Legislature will approve bills aimed at allocating state funds less rigidly, helping to preserve county and city jobs and services.

Bills would allow local government budget flexibility

New bills being debated by the Washington State Legislature could help to save your job.

Here's why: The measures, if approved, will free up money that now is allocated to projects that might take years to complete. That money can instead be used to ensure funding for jobs and services that might otherwise run out of cash.

Before the economic crisis hit, it was understandable that money would be allocated by the Washington State Legislature to certain projects, such as a new building. Now that there is less money to go around those dollars would be better used to maintain facilities and fix problems. And who better to decide how the money will be spent than local elected officials?

To achieve this, however, requires a change in the law. So Council 2 is working with The Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association

Adapting to change

Bills before the Washington State Legislature are aimed at allocating available money in more flexible ways as a result of the economic crisis, which was not foreseen when the money was originally allocated.

Redirect existing funds



Bills will provide changes to existing funds that local officials can tailor to meet the needs of our counties and cities. For example, instead of being channeled to capital projects, the available money can be used for maintenance or repair.

Fund street maintenance



Measures will provide cities with the much-needed resources to maintain safe streets by authorizing the governing body of a street maintenance utility to impose charges on users to fund the preservation and maintenance of urban streets.

Focus on the BUDGET CRISIS

of Counties to push for legislation that would provide the flexibility and local control to best deal with the crisis.

"Most money usually has restrictions on its use," explains Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson. "Those restrictions might have made sense at the time the authority was granted, but during the economic crisis local governments should be allowed to redirect their revenue and

See FLEXIBILITY, Page 2

PERC rules in favor of library employees

Timberland Regional Library System interfered with employee rights, discriminated against employees and illegally refused to bargain, according to a preliminary finding by the Public Employees' Relations Commission (PERC).

The commission made the ruling in response to Council 2's filing of an unfair labor practice charge against the library system.

The filing followed several unsuccessful attempts by the local union to initiate bargaining with the system's administration. It also was a result of retaliation by the administration against the workers for joining the union.

The face-off began after Timberland employees voted to join Council 2 in August last year. After the election, the library administration filed a complaint with PERC, alleging that the affiliation

process was not conducted properly.

In the meantime, the association went ahead with regular bargaining with management as Timberland already had an employee association, the status of which was not changed when the workers joined Council 2.

"The contract expired at the end of the year and so nothing prevented the

See TIMBERLAND, Page 3

Fixing our broken ballot system

The initiative process began in Washington State 99 years ago as a reflection of the will of the people, an opportunity for the entire electorate to vote for or against legislation. In the past decade, however, the process of qualifying a measure for the ballot has become big business. Initial laws did not foresee these changes and their impacts and need updating to ensure the initiative process stays intact, protects voters and operates under best business practices.

**Guest column by
Ballot Initiative
Network, Seattle**

Big business of ballot measures

Since 2002, nearly \$7.2 million has been paid to signature gathering firms to qualify measures to the ballot in Washington State. The increased use of paid signature gatherers over the years has sometimes come with a price. Signature gatherers are often paid by volume providing incentive for possible fraud. Numerous cases of forgery, misrepresentation about the intent of a petition, and deception causing people to sign more than one petition at a time have been documented across initiative states.

Current system is broken

The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, a national organization, recognized the discrepancies in the laws surrounding ballot measures. Earlier this year, they released a report grading 24 states on the integrity of their ballot measure process. Washington State's outdated system received a failing grade of "F" for lack of standards, transparency, accountability, oversight, and enforcement.

Last year's elections in Washington State highlight a broken system that simply does not hold signature gatherers accountable. Protect Marriage Washington's attempts to overturn the domestic partnership law by qualifying Referendum 71 to the ballot were rife with controversy. Not only were deceptive tactics used to persuade petition signers, but many voters were convinced they were signing a petition promoting legalization of gay marriage.

Protect Marriage Washington played fast and loose with the rules in more than one way. Although public disclosure reports submitted by Protect Marriage Washington did not show expenditures for paid signature gatherers, video and pictures captured evidence to the contrary.

Following the lead of other states

In Oregon, signature gatherers were found guilty of "round tabling", a practice of petition gatherers sitting around a table and forging signatures. In Missouri, a signature gatherer picked up by the police was wanted in three states for signature gathering fraud related charges. These are just a few examples of challenges other states have faced. Washington would do well to follow their lead in adopting commonsense solutions.

Proposed legislation

The Ballot Initiative Network proposes the following legislation to bring accountability and transparency to our ballot measure process:

- Require affidavits attesting that all signatures were collected in accordance with state laws are signed by signature gatherers. Without this system in place, forgery or fraud cannot be tracked back to the individual responsible.
- Invalidate petition sheets that either do not contain a signed declaration or contain a false declaration.

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No end in sight to budget crisis, says state senator

Brace yourselves. It will be some time before the budget crisis facing the state improves.



Sen. Craig Pridemore

Indeed, the picture likely will get worse before it gets better. That was the blunt message from Washington State Sen. Craig Pridemore when he spoke to Council 2 members during the recent Legislative Weekend in Olympia.

"Sales tax revenue has fallen, but even when it returns to a more sustained level it will be a while before we see an improvement," he said. "Our services are going to see setbacks for as far as we can see. There is no end in sight."

Pridemore said discussions are regularly held on how to handle the state budget to get through the crisis, but few discussions focus on local government. In this regard, measures that propose providing flexibility on how funds are spent will help to channel money where it is most needed.

It is only when discussing the public sector that people seem to think you do better by rewarding your employees by paying them less or by replacing well-paid workers with lower-paid workers, Pridemore added.

"You don't seem to get that treatment in the private sector."

But, Pridemore said, there is hope. "We have seen these times before, but we have always seen the better times come back and I am convinced we will see them now."

"Keep your chin up and work your best even though few people might seem to appreciate it."

"A lot of citizens will not notice the vital services you perform until they are gone."

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Focus on the
BUDGET CRISIS

Employees should not be forced into taking a risk they might not want to take, union says

When new city or county employees are hired they are given a choice between PERS Plan 2 or Plan 3, which is riskier than Plan 2. If they do not make a choice within 90 days they are put in Plan 3.

The reason Plan 3 is riskier is that half of the fund is based on market returns. Should the market gain, they would benefit, but they would lose out should the market crash again as it did in 2008.

Council 2 believes that an em-

ployee should be free to take the risk and choose PERS 3, but should not be automatically placed in it.

Not only are employees placed in the plan at the outset of their employment, but they also will remain in the plan for the duration of their employment.

"Why would you put a person who does not make a choice into the more risky plan?" asks Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson.

"Our argument is simple, only

employees who affirmatively choose Plan 3 should be put in Plan 3."

Measures aimed at doing this were introduced last year, but failed to pass. They have been introduced again this year.

The good news this year is that those bills would save more than \$50 million for the PERS system over a 25-year period, giving them a stronger chance of being approved.

House bills would help local governments deal with budget shortfalls

Currently, the State has a series of restrictions that hamper local governments in dealing with budget shortfalls. Three bills that would allow flexibility were heard in the House Finance Committee and drew positive testimony from a host of Local Government Officials.

HB 2650

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows city and county real estate excise taxes to be used for certain maintenance and operation expenditures for capital facilities.
- Allows a city and county real estate excise tax to be used for additional capital facilities.
- Eliminates non-supplant restrictions for various local sales and use taxes and multiyear property tax lid lifts.
- Adds "human services" to the list of permissible expenditures for local criminal justice and public safety sales and use taxes.
- Allows local gambling revenue to be used for any public safety purpose.
- Allows the state-shared hotel-motel tax to be used for maintaining or enhancing tourism, including public safety improvements.

HB 2749

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates remaining non-supplant provisions for the county public safety sales and use tax, the county mental health/chemical dependency sales and use tax, and multiyear lid lifts.
- Authorizes counties to impose utility taxes.

- Authorizes cities to impose business taxes on water-sewer districts.

- Allows city and county real estate excise taxes to be used for park maintenance and operation expenditures and eliminates non-supplant restrictions.

- Imposes the brokered natural gas use tax at the location where the gas is consumed or stored.

HB 2773

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates, until January 1, 2015, the voter-approval requirement for the public safety sales and use tax.
- Eliminates non-supplant restrictions for criminal justice, public safety, and mental health sales and use taxes.

Local Option Street Maintenance

HB 2618

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes cities and towns to establish a jurisdiction-wide street maintenance utility.
- Authorizes the governing body of a street maintenance utility to impose charges on users to fund the preservation and maintenance of urban streets.
- Repeals the existing street utility statutes.

FLEXIBILITY, from Page 1

put their resources where they are most needed.

"It does not make sense to try to build new capital projects when we don't have the money to maintain current ones. We can use it for other things."

"For example, we are running out of money for mental health counseling. The result will be that our jails will have to deal with the mental health problems."

"We need money to fix the problem, which is to deal with the mental-health issues."

"The economic crisis changed the game."

Gov. Chris Gregoire recognizes the need for the issue to be addressed, Thompson adds.

"There is going to be a healthy discussion on this issue, but I am confident there is going to be movement on it, too."

See: "House bills would help local governments deal with budget shortfalls" above.

Scholarships honor members

This year's Council 2 scholarships have been named in honor of, and in memory of, several people.

Details:

\$5,000 Yearly Four-year Award:

In memory of Margaret Dugovich, registered nurse, lifelong Washington resident and mother of longtime Council 2 President Chris Dugovich.

\$5,000 Award:

In honor of Gerri Delisle, retired executive member of Council 2 and member of Local 109-E, Snohomish County Engineers; in memory of Bob Friedman, past member of Local 492, Spokane County Jail; in memory of Don Hanley, past member of Local 1308, Kitsap County; and in honor of Doug Peterson, retired member of Local 21, City of Seattle.

\$2,000 Award:

In memory of Loralee Armstrong, past member of Local 120, Tacoma Public Library; in honor of Becky Lake, laid-off member of Local 2617, City of Kent; and in memory of Carol Sinclair, past member of Local 1857, King County Library System.

Continuing Education Award:

In memory of Margie Beechie, past member of Local 120, Pierce County; in memory of Larry Hoel, past member of Local 1135-ST, Stevens County Road Department; and in memory of Utah Phillips, past union activist and singer.

BALLOT from Page 2

- Include a penalty for making a false declaration.
- Require signature gathering companies and subcontractors register with the Public Disclosure Commission and disclose which ballot measure they are collecting signatures for.
- Allow registrations of paid signature gatherers and firms to be revoked if fraud is proven in Washington or any other state.

These amendments modernize our current laws protecting voters and making certain signature gathering firms follow best business practices.

Updates to the ballot measure process allow us to keep up with industry and ensure another 99 years of direct vote of the people.

Ballot Initiative Network, 1402 Third Avenue, Suite 201, Seattle, WA 98101 206-420-0139

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employees from bargaining with the administration," explains Council 2 Director of Organizing Bill Keenan.

But not only did the employer not recognize Council 2, they refused to bargain with the association.

"They have acted as though the association does not exist," Keenan says.

As a result, employees had to pay their own medical insurance premiums — the first time they have had to do so in the history of the library association.

The premiums are part of the negotiations in the contract, but they expired with the contract at the end of last year.

When Timberland, responding to a letter from the association concerning the affiliation vote, continued to refuse to bargain, the union launched the unfair labor practice charge.

How to get your message through to your legislator

If you want to present your case to your legislators effectively you need to understand how they think and appreciate the demands on their time.

You need to look at the world through their eyes, not yours.

That is the advice of Steve Duncan, a consultant for the Washington Library Association, who spoke at Council 2's recent Legislative Weekend held in Olympia.

In his talk, Duncan provided tips on how to get your message through to legislators.

- Study them to understand who they are and what they care about.

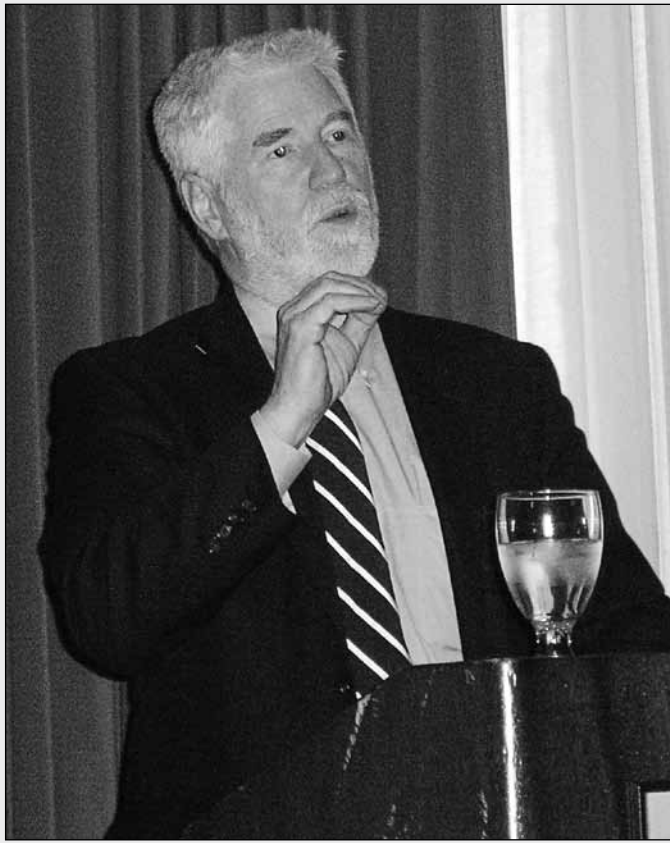
"The best way to do this is through their campaign and legislative web sites," he said. "Determine their interests, what bills they have prime sponsored, and what committees they sit on. They tend to specialize in specific issue areas.

"Keep in mind there are more than 40 policy committees so the most important thing to you may not be the most important thing to them. Frame your message accordingly."

Duncan also suggested using Facebook.

"Invite a legislator to be your friend. You will learn a lot about them. It gives you a good insight into what's on their mind."

- Contact them often.



Steve Duncan speaks at the Legislative Weekend

"The way to get your message to stick is through frequency of contact," he said.

"Most people want to cover all their points in one great mega meeting or letter. Unfortunately, this usually overwhelms them.

"Short, crisp letters, e-mails, and personal visits all combine to sink in a message. It's a lot like TV advertising. A 30-second spot played multiple times is more effective than one five-minute infomercial."

- Consider writing a letter.

"I am big on letters because no one uses them anymore," Duncan added. "A stamped envelope with a handwritten address will stick out and draw attention. But keep it short."

- Use e-mail effectively.

"E-mail is the quickest way to communicate, but also easy to delete or triage," he said. Duncan suggests being clear in the subject line. Write something like, "Vote NO on 7004." Then make your case in one or two paragraphs.

"Don't use hot links," Duncan adds.

"If the information is that important, paste it into the body of the e-mail message. Don't make them do the work."

- Practice is the key to good testimony.

He advised against reading from a prepared script.

"People usually write out their testimony in advance," Duncan said. "But testimony by its very nature is oral. It's important to practice what you have written by reading it aloud, then edit it for flow and brevity.

"Don't get hung up on grammar; write it the way you will speak it. The goal is to make it conversational versus reading a written statement."

- Remember to say "thank you."

"It is really easy to do, means a lot, and people rarely do it."

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Under the Capitol Dome



Council 2 members pose for a picture under the dome of the Washington State Capitol building during the Legislative Weekend held in Olympia in late January. See pages 1 and 2 for reports on the event.

Local union's coat drive proves highly successful



Local 1849-F members at the Town of Friday Harbor held a successful coat drive recently to ensure nobody went without a basic necessity such as a coat this winter.

The staff invited residents to drop off clean and gently used coats and jackets at the town hall administrative offices, from where the San Juan Island Family Resource Center distributed them as part of the One Warm Coat community service project, free of charge, to local children and adults.

The drive resulted in 243 coats being dropped off at the offices, most of which were distributed to more than 90 San Juan Island families. Surplus coats were distributed on Lopez Island.

"Almost all of the coats were like new and in very good condition. This community should be very proud of themselves for helping others in need," says Roxanna Zalmanek, a member of the local union's executive board. "Most were adult coats. When we do this again later this year we will emphasize that we need children's coats as well."

Left: Local members gather outside the administrative offices.

