

the Courthouse Journal

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*Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties*

**January 20, 2006
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Governor Gregoire and Senator Schoesler Speak at WSAC Legislative Rally

Governor Christine Gregoire and Senator Mark Schoesler (9th District, Republic Whip) spoke to over eighty County Commissioners, council members and county executives during WSAC's annual Legislative Rally January 19. Governor Gregoire spoke on several key issues:

- **Fiscal Responsibility.** Governor Gregoire spoke of her intent to have a healthy fund balance heading into the 07-09 biennium – stating she wanted to have \$900 million available.
- **WASL.** Governor Gregoire indicated her support not to lessen the high standards for academic achievement; that in a global market place, education is critical.
- **Energy Assistance.** Governor Gregoire noted bi-partisan support for an energy assistance bill that quickly moved through the House and Senate so some 14,000 families would receive assistance on their energy bills this winter.
- **Alternative Energy Sources.** Stated her support for the investing in biofuel businesses in Washington. She suggested that strategic investments and loans should be made to support new markets for energy crops like canola or mustard.

Gregoire also responded to questions

from WSAC members on a variety of issues including mental health and Medicaid/Medicare funding, Sales Tax Streamlining, affordable housing, growth management and pension funding.

Senator Schoesler, filling in for Senate Minority Leader Mike Hewitt, also covered a range of issues but focused much of his discussion on the supplemental budget process, and the view of the Senate Republicans that a Biennial Budget should be adequate to deliver state services and a supplemental budget should be focused only on the following elements:

- To take care of changes in case loads, enrollments, and other similar programs;
- To cover unforeseen disasters or events.

Senator Schoesler indicated his willingness to work on pension funding and policy, basic education and sales tax streamlining.

WSAC extends their thanks to both Governor Gregoire and Senator Schoesler.

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What information do you need to include in your e-mail?

Visit [Employment Opportunities](#)

The Courthouse Journal

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We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly deadline is noon Wednesday.

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Budget, Finance and Taxes

Sales Tax Exemption for Farm Fuel Moving Fast

HB 2424 continues on its fast track for passage. The bill would exempt from retail sales tax diesel fuel to a farm fuel user for non-highway use.

Diesel fuel used for space or water heating for human habitation is not exempt under the legislation. The fiscal impact of the legislation for local governments is \$185,000 for fiscal year 2007 (April 1 to June 30) and \$1.2 million each fiscal year thereafter. A public hearing on **HB 2424** was held on January 16 in the Senate Agriculture & Rural Economic Development Committee. Again, WSAC asked that the legislation exempt only the state's portion of the sales tax or provide some other method for preserving the county tax base. Whitman County Treasurer Bob Lothspeich also testified with concerns about the bill and gave examples as to the negative impact on his county. The bill is now in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. If you are concerned about the fiscal impact of this legislation, you are encouraged to contact your Senators today.

Sales Tax Streamlining Bill Voted Out of Committee - Floor Action Expected Soon

This week the Senate Ways and Means Committee heard **SB 6594**, Governor Request legislation to conform to the Streamlined Sales Tax Agreement. WSAC, WACO, AWC, Washington Retail Association, Amazon.com, the Association of Washington Business, and other business community members testified in support of the legislation

with changes for full mitigation of local revenue losses. No one testified in opposition. On January 18, the committee took executive action and unanimously voted to move **SSB 6594** to Rules with a do pass recommendation. The substitute bill contains full mitigation. Please contact your Senators in support of **SSB 6594**. A floor vote on the legislation is expected to quickly occur.

Past Tri-Association Legislation Up for Hearing

In 2003, the Legislature granted an additional voter approved sales tax power of up to 0.3% to be shared by counties and cities. The bill provided that counties would send a county wide measure to the ballot, but that the revenues would be distributed 60% to counties and 40% to the cities within that county. Additionally, 30% of the revenues were required to be used for criminal justice purposes and no revenues could be used to supplant existing funds.

On Wednesday, January 18, at 1:30 pm, the House Finance Committee will hear **HB 2988**, a bill to remove the criminal justice and non-supplant requirements. These provisions have resulted in unintended consequences. For example, one time funding such as grants for purchases of law enforcement equipment, are included in the base for the non-supplanting test. Over the long term, as cities grow and unincorporated areas shrink, counties must reduce their law enforcement expenditures, while

NOTE: Legislative Committee schedules and agendas can be found at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Budget, Finance and Taxes (continued)

cities increase theirs. The non-supplant provision prohibits the efficient use of taxpayer dollars and prevents communities from funding their particular priorities (economic development, human services, housing, etc.) **HB 2988** would still require voter approval to impose the sales tax, but provide counties with the flexibility to use the funds as their communities determine.

Tax Preference Review Bill Returns

On January 17, **HB 1069**, Representative McIntire's bill requiring audits of all tax preferences (exemptions, exclusions, deductions, credits, deferrals, and preferential rate) was moved directly to the floor calendar. The bill is unchanged from the 2005 legislative session. It would create a citizen commission to develop a schedule for this review and would require all preferences, except those required by constitutional law or determined to be a critical part of the structure of the tax system, once every ten years. The bill additionally requires the Joint Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to conduct the actual reviews of tax preferences, according to criteria set in the bill with an annual report to the Legislature on the reviewed tax preferences.

Property Tax Bills of Interest

On January 19, successful testimony was presented on **HB 2509**. A big thank you to Lewis County Assessor Dianne Dorey, Kitsap County Assessor Jim Avery and King County Assessor Scott Noble for taking time to come to Olympia to testify. The testimony ranged from brief reasons why the change needed to be made, to compelling evidence

presented by Jim Avery in the form of a letter from one of his Fire Districts supporting **HB 2509**. Scott Noble gave an abbreviated account of the progression structure of changes in the levy process, and this being the next logical step in the chain. Simply stated, "Let the people know what they are voting on." This bill is scheduled for an executive session next week.

The next point of interest is a draft report to the Washington Legislature. This was a report mandated by **SB 5396**. Gary Cooper of the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation was ordered to draw up the draft report. Many hours and meetings have gone into this draft, and we thank the six counties and their respective assessors who put so much time and effort into gathering data, collating, mapping and everything else they were asked to do. Keep in mind, these six counties have less than 30% of their land in private ownership and it was quite a challenge for most of them. Okanogan County and Assessor Scott Furman, Yakima County and Assessor Dave Cook, Skamania County and Assessor Gary Martin, Jefferson County and Assessor Jack Westerman, Chelan County and Assessor Russ Griffith, Ferry County and Assessor Rachel Siracuse; all of these people contributed greatly and without a whimper. And yes, they were called on time and time again. Thank you, you made a difference.

The report itself deals with a projection of the Impacts of Payments in Lieu of Taxes, and should be released shortly. There are definitely items of interest in the report, so watch for it in the future. Last, but not least, thanks to Gary

Cooper at IAC who did a terrific job of putting the data together, Dan Budd and Elyse Kane from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Craig Calhoun at the Department of Natural Resources and Jeff Olsen from the office of Program Research. Many thanks for all your efforts and all your time.

REET Automation Bill

HB 2879, modifying the electronic administration of the real estate excise tax and revising the fees, was heard by the House Finance Committee this week. Grays Harbor County Treasurer Ron Strabbing, Legislative Committee vice chair, testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the Treasurers' Association. The companion bill, **SB 6577**, will be heard in the Senate Ways & Means Committee at 1:30 p.m., on Wednesday, January 25.

Distrain of Personal Property

Phil Sanders, interim manager of the Treasury Section in King County, went before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Thursday, to speak to **SB 6441**, relating to judicial orders concerning the distraint of personal property. The bill gives the authority to a district or superior court judge to issue a warrant for search and seizure of property subject to distraint. The bill with the warrant language is necessary because of a Supreme Court decision, but county treasurers were not comfortable with some of the language. Phil was successful in working with the proponents of the bill to work out differences, prior to the hearing.

Budget, Finance, and Taxes (continued)

Mobile Homes

Next week, the House Housing Committee will hear **HB 2719**, authorizing the conditional cancellation of delinquent property taxes on mobile homes. This bill says that mobile home park owners who sell mobiles such as foreclosures of a landlord lien, are only required

to pay one year "or less" of delinquent property taxes. Lewis County Treasurer Rose Bowman, Treasurers' Legislative Committee Chair and Thurston County Treasurer Robin Hunt have collaborated on a letter to the committee opposing the bill. In 2003, treasurers worked with the mobile

home park owners to make changes to RCW 46.44.170, allowing park owners to destroy an abandoned mobile home and have the taxes eliminated. They surmise that this is sufficient. The bill is on the committee agenda, Thursday, January 26 at 10:00 a.m.

Courts, Public Safety, Law & Justice

Law and Justice Bills

HB 2805, a bill relating to missing persons, is up for hearing at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 24, in the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee. **HB 2805** is a priority of WACO and the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (WACME). **HB 2805** is the beginning of coordinating all the efforts that have been made by various groups in the state.

Sheriffs Secure WACO Support of Meth Bills

The WACO Legislative Committee, on behalf of the membership, voted Wednesday to give WACO's full support to **SB 6484**, **HB 2919**, and **SB 6239**. All three bills deal with enforcement of methamphetamine laws and all three provide assistance to counties.

Senator Doumit is sponsoring **SB 6484** which, if successful, will provide \$1.75 million annually to be divided equally among three areas of Washington State where funding to combat the "methademic" has been deficient. The areas are southeast, southwest and northeast. **SB 6484** is enjoying bipartisan support from members from all over the state as is

its companion **HB 2919**, sponsored by Representative Brian Blake. Small counties who receive no federal funding are targeted in both bills.

State Attorney General Rob McKenna unveiled **SB 6239**, another meth bill, on Monday at a press conference with Senators Hargrove, Johnson, and Esser, some of the sponsors of **SB 6239**. The press conference was followed by a hearing in the Human Services and Corrections Committee.

SB 6239 attacks many facets of the meth crisis across the state and proposes restoration of federal funds many drug task forces have lost lately. Grays Harbor County Sheriff Mike Whelan, Mason County Sheriff Steve Whybark, and Pacific County Sheriff John Didion testified in support of **SB 6239**.

County Clerks and Court Fees

SB 6670 is a proposal of county clerks to make technical fixes to court fees set last year in a senate bill to increase fees. **SB 6670** has been referred to Judiciary and will make fees and related statutes consistent. No hearing has been set at this time but county clerks are encouraged to contact Chair Senator Adam Kline

and request a hearing for **SB 6670** and **HB 1471**!

County Clerks' HB 1471 Moving!

HB 1471, authentication of documents, was voted out of the House with a vote of 96 to 0 on Wednesday and has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. **HB 1471** allows certified documents to be transmitted and by means other than telegraph. The applicable statutes have not been amended since 1881. That should be reason enough to pass **HB 1471**! Don't forget to contact Senator Kline and request **HB 1471** and **SB 6670** be heard – in a perfect world, at the same time!

Elections, Licensing and Recording

County Auditors to Meet in Olympia

The County Auditors' Association will hold their Licensing Conference at the Comfort Inn, in Tumwater, on Monday and Tuesday, January 23 and 24, and their Legislative Conference at the Washington Counties Building, Wednesday and Thursday, January 25 and 26. In addition, on Thursday, the auditors have invited legislators to breakfast at 7:00 a.m. at The Mason Jar, in Tumwater. At last count, 30 legislators will be attending the breakfast. This annual event, which has become increasingly popular over the last several years, is a great time for both groups to discuss legislative issues that are important to various stakeholders in the elections, licensing, recording and finance areas. County auditors will also spend considerable time at hearings and visiting with legislators in their offices next week. The following legislation should be at the forefront of those conversations and meetings with Senators and Representatives: (See articles below).

Primary Date Change (WACO/County Auditor/SOS Legislative Recommendation)

SB 6236, changing the date of the primary from the third Tuesday in September to the third Tuesday in August, moved from the Senate Rules Committee to the Senate calendar on Thursday. Now is the time to speak with your Senators and ask for a yes vote!

County Auditor Request Bills (Elections and Licensing)

Island County Auditor Suzanne Sinclair, co-chair of the Auditors' Legislative Committee, and Thurston County Auditor Kim Wyman testified in favor of **HB 2694**, eliminating Saturday counting of ballots; **HB 2695**, modifying telephone notification requirements on absentee or provisional ballots; and **HB 2696**, modifying election recount provisions in the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee, Wednesday. The Senate versions of the bills, **SB 6421**, **SB 6423** and **SB 6422**, respectively, will be heard by the Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee, on Monday, January 23, at 10:00 a.m.

The county auditors have also been working with the Department of Licensing (DOL) and its Titling Registration Advisory Committee (TRAC) to develop a bill to seek a revenue source to replace and maintain the Vehicle Field Services computer system, which was activated in 1988, as well as to provide the current level of service to the public regarding licensing services. This service has been increasingly difficult to maintain, especially in small and mid-sized counties, due to revenue shortfalls, which have diverted funding to other areas, such as criminal justice. Language developed by the county auditors with the approval of TRAC was developed and dropped in the House as **HB 3075**. The bill increases the fee for vehicle or vessel registration from 75 cents to \$2.50 to be split as follows: \$1.25 to be used by DOL to replace and maintain the Vehicle Field Services Computer

Program – with \$1.00 to be deposited with the state treasurer to be redistributed monthly to a licensing services fund in the county auditors' offices for providing licensing services and 25 cents to be used for the license plate technology fund. The formula for redistributing the filing fee would result in the larger counties helping to subsidize the smaller and mid-size counties.

More Elections Issues

Friday morning, the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee gave do pass recommendations to two Secretary of State (SOS) request bills: **HB 2477**, making technical changes to election laws, and **HB 2478**, clarifying laws on ballot measures. These bills will now move to the House Rules Committee. The committee heard testimony on two other SOS requests, **HB 2752**, concerning valid voter registrations and **HB 2753**, allowing electronic voter registration. Public testimony was also taken on **HB 2526**, modifying voter challenge procedures. Auditors' Legislative Committee co-chair Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County, testified in favor of **HB 2752** and joined SOS staff in expressing concerns over **HB 2576**. Among other things, the bill provides that challenges may be based on duplicate registrations, and it was noted by SOS that though the voter challenge statutes may be antiquated, there is a need to distinguish voter challenges from regular maintenance of voter registration lists which eliminate duplicate voters. Bob pointed out that this bill, if passed, could very well lead to many frivolous challenges.

Elections, Licensing and Recording (continued)

Bills of Concern to Auditors

County auditors need to take a close look at several bills of concern being heard by the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee next week. We would encourage everyone in town for the Legislative

Conference to attend the hearing on Wednesday, January 25, at 1:30. On the schedule are **HB 2484**, making changes to the partisan primary ballot format; **HB 2523**, auditing the signature verification process in elections; **HB 2532**, providing for election audits; **HB 2594**, providing

assistance to non-English speaking voters; and **HB 2843**, modifying absentee ballot envelope content. Auditors can see copies of each of these bills at www.leg.wa.gov

Environment, Land Use and Resources

GMA Bills Introduced Including Three Bills from Governor's Land Use Agenda

HB 2917/SB 6575 provides for the ability for greater agriculture activities including "production, storage, distribution and marketing" of agricultural products and adds "non-agricultural related uses" that are "compatible in size, scale, and intensity with and will not interfere with the agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties.

HB 2814/6427 provides a three year extension to GMA planning requirements, except critical areas, to those counties that had a population of less than fifty thousand and had its population increase by seventeen percent or less in the prior ten years.

Similarly, the bill also affects cities with a population of less than one hundred, or cities that had a population of greater than one hundred and less than five thousand and had its population increase by seventeen percent or less in the prior ten years.

HB 2815/6569 contains three basic elements:

1. The growth management hearings boards are directed to adopt

procedures and criteria for retaining scientific or other experts;
2. They stipulate that in the development of critical areas policies and development regulations, counties and cities must address each of the following on the record:

(a) To demonstrate that the best available science was included:

(i) The specific policies and development regulations adopted to protect the functions and values of critical areas; and

(ii) The sources of best available scientific information included in the decision making; and

(b) Any other information, including legal, social, cultural, economic, and political information, and other programs that may have been included in developing critical areas policies and regulations.

3. CTED is allowed in collaboration with other state agencies, with jurisdiction and expertise, written management recommendations

HB 2584 establishes a blue ribbon growth management needs and priorities task to conduct a comprehensive analysis of statewide growth management needs and priorities; existing and potential funding mechanisms; and the policies and practices of

governmental entities, private businesses, and the general public that affect the development and implementation of growth management goals and requirements.

The task force shall provide quarterly progress reports to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature. The task force shall report its final findings and recommendations to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2008.

Land Use-Eminent Domain

Multiple bills have been introduced in response to the recent United States Supreme Court decision, *Kelo v. New London* (No. 04-108 (June 23, 2005)), which upheld, under the United States Constitution, a Connecticut city's exercise of eminent domain to acquire property for private economic development purposes.

HB 2626/SB6345 re-affirming existing Washington state law in the state Constitution, state supreme court decisions, and statutes relating to the use of eminent domain by state and local governments.

Environment, Land Use and Resources (continued)

HB 2626/SB6345 is at the request of Governor Christine Gregoire and Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland. It simply intends to have the legislature reaffirm existing Washington state law relating to the use of eminent domain by state and local governments. The intent of this act is to make clear that Article I, section 16 of the Washington State Constitution prohibits the use of eminent domain to take private property for private use, except under narrow exceptions. A substitute is expected to include first right of refusal to the land owner at the time of the condemnation action.

HB 2427 providing restrictions on the exercise of eminent domain. Sponsored by Representative Hans Dunshee, **HB 2427** establishes a new statutory definition of "public use" as: "the possession, occupation, or enjoyment of the property by the general public or by the state, or a county, city, town, or other municipality; or the use of land for the creation or functioning of public utilities or common carriers such as railroads, utilities, or toll roads; or the acquisition of property to cure a concrete harmful effect of the current use of the land, including the removal of public nuisances or structures that are beyond repair or unfit for human habitation or use; or the acquisition of abandoned

property; or the redevelopment or rehabilitation of blighted areas." **HB 2427** further makes it clear that "the taking of private property by a county for economic development does not constitute a public use where the primary purpose of such development is for an increase in the tax base, tax revenues, employment, or general economic health."

HB 2854 Limiting the power of eminent domain establishes the definition of "Public use" as "only the actual possession, occupation, or enjoyment of the property by the general public or by the county; or the use of land for the creation or functioning of public utilities or common carriers such as railroads, utilities, or toll roads. The taking of private property by the county for economic development does not constitute public use." **HB 2854** states that "Public use shall not be equated with public purpose, public interest, or public benefit, such as promoting economic development, creating jobs, improving the tax base, or enhancing tax revenues by building, expanding, or upgrading private retail, commercial, industrial, or residential establishments". **HB 2854** states that the land acquired via condemnation can only be used for the reasons acquired and if not used within ten years from the date of condemnation or at any time used

for intend purposed, the original land owner may re-acquire at acquisition price, with market interest. **HB 2854** allows the land owner to have a first right to reacquire the land for the amount of the compensation received in the eminent domain proceedings with interest at the market rate, or the fair market value, whichever is less, before the land, may otherwise be sold or transferred.

Courthouse Ramblings

Cowlitz County Coroner **Mike Nichols** is retiring from office January 31, after 7 years in office.

* * * * *

Calendar of Events

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Information</i>
For your convenience training and workshops are bolded.			
<u>JANUARY 2006</u>			
WA State Assn of County Auditors' Licensing Conference	Comfort Inn, Tumwater	January 23-24	(360) 753-7319
WA State Assn of County Auditors' Legislative Conference	Comfort Inn, Tumwater	January 25-26	(360) 753-7319
WSAC/WACO/AWC Tri Assn	Red Lion, Olympia	January 26	
WA State Assn of County Assessors' Legislative Conference	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	January 31 - February 2	(360) 753-7319
<u>FEBRUARY 2006</u>			
WSAC Urban County Caucus	Mercato's Ristorante, Olympia	February 1/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Rural Issues Sub-committee	Ramblin' Jack's Restaurant, Olympia	February 1/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	Red Lion Hotel, Olympia	February 2/9:30-1	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Urban County Caucus	Mercato's Ristorante, Olympia	February 15/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Rural Issues Sub-committee	Ramblin' Jack's Restaurant, Olympia	February 15/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	February 16/9:30-1	(360) 753-1886
WA Assn of County Auditors' Finance Conference	North Bonneville Hot Springs Resort, North Bonneville	February 28 - Mar.2	(360) 753-7319
<u>MARCH 2006</u>			
WSAC Urban County Caucus	Mercato's Ristorante, Olympia	March 1/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Rural Issues Sub-committee	Ramblin' Jack's Restaurant, Olympia	March 1/6:30-9	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	March 2/9:30-1	(360) 753-1886
NACo Legislative Conference	Washington, D.C.	March 4 - 8	http://www.naco.org
Legislative Session Ends – Sine Die	Olympia	March 9	
WCIF/WCIP Board and Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC)	Spokane	March 16	(360) 586-0466
Washington County Administrative Assn - Annual Business	Enzian Inn, Leavenworth	March 22 - 24	(360) 577-3065 Claire Hauge, haugec@co.cowlitz.wa.us
WA Assn of County Auditors' Recording Conference	Leavenworth	March 27 - 28	(360) 753-7319

Attachments



THE CASCADE CENTER AT THE DANIEL J. EVANS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



Managing Organizational Change

Arn Howitt

February 15 – 17, 2006

The course is designed to help public managers in local and state government or the nonprofit sectors take a *strategic* approach to leading change in their own or closely affiliated agencies.

We most often think of change as involving a shift or redefinition of agency mission, but it often demands more. Change also frequently requires renegotiating relationships with key stakeholders (higher-level policy officials, elected leaders, and constituency groups) to make sure that necessary resources, legal authority, and political backing are available to support change. In addition, it demands rethinking what operational capacity (e.g., staff, skills, equipment) is needed to accomplish goals.

Thinking strategically about change therefore requires us to assess carefully the simultaneous interactions of these factors – in other words, how shifts in mission, stakeholder relationships, and operational capacity are *connected*.

Managing change in the public sector requires leadership, entrepreneurial skills, and risk taking, just as it does in the private sector. But the necessary leadership can come from the *middle* of an organization as well as from the top, and no single style of leadership fits all change situations. *Acting strategically*, therefore, requires finding a fit between one's leadership style and the needs of the situation.

While change creates *opportunity* for major improvement in how agencies function and achieve their goals, it also generates significant *stress* that permeates the organization. Many desirable change initiatives founder or fail outright because initiators focus too narrowly on only part of the overall change management problem. They may concentrate on altering agency structure, for example, while paying too little attention to other key factors, such as organizational culture.

Managing strategically requires a more comprehensive approach, simultaneously aligning formal organizational structure, critical tasks and processes, culture, and the needs of the organization's people.

The objective of the course is to make these somewhat abstract themes meaningful in the context of the jobs participants perform, and useful enough to take back to work.

The course will use a variety of teaching methods, including case studies, panel discussion and study groups.

Who We Are: Established in 1984, the Cascade Center for Public Service and Leadership is part of the executive education program at the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, providing leadership and management training to managers and executives in public and nonprofit agencies.

Tuition Details: Tuition for this course is \$1,125. UW Alumni Association members and current students in the Traditional, Mid-Career, and Executive MPA programs at Evans are eligible for tuition discount.

How to Register: **On-line:** <http://www.casacadecourses.org> **Contact Us:** Cascade Center for Public Service and Leadership, Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington, Box 353055, Seattle, WA 98195-3055, 206-685-0523 (phone), 206-543-1096 (fax), cascade@u.washington.edu

Attachments

Kids Glimpse Meth's Horror

By Heather Woodward, The Olympian, January 19, 2006

Bailee Syrek hadn't heard much about methamphetamine before Wednesday morning. After a school assembly about the drug, the Griffin Middle School sixth-grader said it sounds like scary stuff.

"If they didn't come talk to us, people might not realize how bad it is," said Bailee, 10.

"I never knew it could do that to you," said Samantha Hibbard, 11, a sixth-grader sitting next to Bailee during the assembly.

The assembly was part of "Operation: Allied Against Meth," an initiative Attorney General Rob McKenna launched last year to help prevent and curtail meth use statewide.

Presentations have been given at 10 schools across Washington, in partnership with the nonprofit organization Lead on America and other community-based organizations.

"We need your help," McKenna told Griffin sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. "Meth is one of the scariest drugs that we've seen ever in this state, and our state has one of the biggest problems in the country."

The assembly comes in the same week McKenna spoke in support of an anti-meth bill before the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee. The bill would provide money to help local governments more effectively clean up meth labs and provide better treatment, public education and criminal penalties.

Meth use often can be tied to other crimes, and it's costing taxpayers millions to clean up and treat, McKenna said.

During the assembly, students learned about the possible effects of

using meth, including loss of sleep for up to weeks at a time, yellowing or rotting teeth, a rapid heart rate, seizures, paranoia and death. One of the most dramatic demonstrations of what the drug can do came during a video originally broadcast on MTV about a healthy 22-year-old woman who started using meth.

After suffering a psychotic episode, the woman underwent a brain scan. It showed her brain — which appeared to have several holes in it — resembled someone in their 60s or 70s who had suffered multiple strokes.

"The brain was probably the most disturbing image," said Jason Monda, 14, an eighth-grader who is the school's Associated Student Body president.

Griffin's ASB contacted McKenna's office about bringing the presentation to the school.

"I'm betting this will have a positive impact on a lot of people that saw it," said Cody Brock, 13, an eighth-grader who is the Griffin ASB secretary.

Travis Talbot, who volunteers his time as education outreach director with Lead on America, said the effort to educate students about the drug is growing more important. He said that's because the age people start using meth is getting younger and younger — now approaching those in their early 20s and late teens.

"Meth is one of the most destructive drugs that is out there," Talbot told students Wednesday. "The problem with meth and any drug out there is that it makes you think you are in control."

Meth Numbers

A major emphasis of the Thurston County Sheriff's Office Special Enforcement Team has been to

curtail the county's methamphetamine problem, with methamphetamine production as its No. 1 target.

In 2004, the team closed down 41 labs in Thurston County.

All Washington state crime labs experienced an overall increase in meth-related evidence analyzed in 2004 compared with the previous year.

Driving-under-the-influence charges involving meth also went up in that time period.

Meth-using parents have helped drive a 62 percent increase in the state's foster care population in the past decade.

In Washington, fewer than 30 percent of meth-addicted parents regain custody of their children.

Publicly funded treatment programs in Washington saw a 9 percent increase in meth-related admissions in 2004 compared with the previous year.

For every pound of meth produced, there are 6 pounds of toxic waste produced.

The cost of cleaning up a meth site can reach \$150,000.

Sources: Thurston County Sheriff's Office, Washington State Office of the Attorney General