

the Courthouse Journal

W A C O U N T I E S . O R G

February 19, 2010

Issue No. 6
Inside the
Courthouse Journal

Budget, Finance & Taxes
Page 4

Environment, Land Use
& Resources
Page 4

General Government
Page 6

Association News
Page 6

Training &
Upcoming Events
Page 7

Courthouse Ramblings
Page 8

Good Things
Page 8

Attachments
Page 9 - 10

Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties

Update on WACO Legislative Package

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

Each year, the WACO membership produces a 'WACO Legislative Package' comprised of the highest priority legislation among each of the seven WACO affiliates. WACO staff prioritizes their time and attention during the legislative session advocating the contents of the WACO Legislative Package to the Legislature. As of Thursday, February 19th the WACO Legislative Package stands as follows:

- *Allow the county legislative authority to impose an existing local option sales tax up to 3/10th of one percent.*
 - *HB 3179 passed the House on February 16th, but was amended to remove the provisions that allow 'council-matic' imposition of the 3/10th of one percent sales tax.*
 - *SB 6424 passed the Senate on February 15th, but was amended to remove the provisions that allow 'council-matic' imposition of the 3/10th of one percent sales tax. SB 6424 is scheduled for a public hearing in the House Finance Committee on February 24th at 8:00 AM.*
- *Allow the county legislative authority to impose a local option utility tax.*
 - *HB 3179 passed the House on February 16th, but was amended to remove the provisions that allow county legislative authorities to impose a local option utility tax.*

Washington Counties Scholarships Now Available!

County elected officials and employees who have students in their families take note!

The Washington Counties' Scholarship Fund is offering five \$3,000 awards to children of county employees who will be enrolled full-time during the 2010-2011 school year in a baccalaureate program, associate degree program or vocational/technical certification program.

Complete information and applications are available on the web at <http://wacounties.org>.

Applications must be postmarked no later than Friday, April 2, 2010!

We encourage all students to apply!

Job announcements & links to County Employment pages at:

<http://wacounties.org/>

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(WACO) wacounties.org/waco

and the **Washington State Association of Counties**

(WSAC) wacounties.org/wsac

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly / bi-weekly deadline is noon Wednesdays. Direct inquiries and correspondence to - *The Courthouse Journal*, 206 Tenth Av SE, Olympia, WA 98501

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- **Allow continuation of highly successful meth enforcement pilot programs in thirteen rural counties. (2 parts)**
 - *Part 1: Amend the State Fiscal Year 2010 budget to correct the allotment schedule, allowing counties to receive the full amount of the 4th year pilot funding as originally expected.*
 - a. *Included in the Governor's proposed budget. Legislative proposed budgets are expected to be revealed in the coming weeks.*
 - *Part 2: Secure ongoing and permanent state financial assistance for the Sheriff, Prosecutor and Clerk in counties that have been historically underserved by federal narcotics task force funding.*
 - a. *Not included in the Governor's proposed budget. Legislative proposed budgets are expected to be revealed in the coming weeks.*
- **Remove the requirement that return mail ballot envelope have a secrecy flap.**
 - *HB 1880 is scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee on February 22nd at 10:00 AM.*
 - *SB 6430 is scheduled for a public hearing in the House State Government & Tribal Affairs Committee on February 23rd at 1:30 PM.*
- **Limit the responsibility of county clerks in certain actions and appropriately place it with the parties to the action.**
 - *HB 1003 DIED in the House Judiciary Committee.*
- **Change child pornography statutes to respond to a specific appellate court decision.**
 - *HB 2424 passed the House on February 16th and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee.*
 - *SB 6201 has been replaced by SB 6397.*
 - *SB 6397 DIED on the Senate floor.*
- **Remove the profitability in certain tax foreclosure scams.**
 - *HB 2410 has been removed from further consideration at the request of WSACT and WACO.*

NOTE: The House proposed budget is scheduled to be released on Tuesday, February 23rd. The Senate proposed budget will soon follow.

Legislative Committee Schedules and Agendas:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

- *SB 6190 has been removed from further consideration at the request of WSACT and WACO.*
- ***Improve ballot title information.***
 - *HB 1057 has been replaced by HB 2702.*
 - *HB 2702 DIED in the House State Government & Tribal Affairs Committee.*
 - *SB 5098 has been replaced by SB 6689.*
 - *SB 6689 DIED on the Senate floor.*

REMINDER: WACO Legislative Committee

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

The WACO Legislative Committee meets every week during the legislative session. The next WACO Legislative Committee is scheduled for Thursday, February 25 at 2:00 PM. All WACO members are welcome and invited to participate.

The Committee reviews recently introduced and active legislation related to any affiliate and considers requests for WACO to take a position or take action on legislation. The Committee also reviews the WACO Legislative Package and provides guidance to the WACO staff in that effort. Each WACO affiliate, time permitting, has an opportunity to review legislative action from their perspective.

Please contact the WACO Office to learn the call in numbers for the WACO Legislative Committee.

Cut-Off Dates

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

Cut-off dates are very important dates for those who live in the legislative world. Cut-off dates are administrative deadlines that the Legislature imposes on itself to control the number of bills that flow through the legislative process. There are seven cut-off dates in each legislative session. The following lists the remaining cut-off dates for the 2010 legislative session:

1. **Tuesday, February 23:** Senate bills must pass policy committees in the House.
2. **Thursday, February 25:** Senate bills must pass the House Appropriations Committee.
3. **Friday, February 26:** House bills must pass Senate policy committees.
4. **Monday, March 1:** House bills must pass the Senate Ways & Means Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee; Senate bills must pass the House Appropriations Committee and House Transportation Committee.
5. **Friday, March 5:** Bills must pass the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate, and Senate bills must pass the House).

The 2010 Legislative Session ends on Thursday, March 11.

Budget, Finance and Taxes

Property Tax Bills that Go Bump in the Night

Official cut off, and as usual, some good bills die, while others wander on. **SB 6689** Ballot Information made it through committee only to fail to be called on the Senate Hearing Floor and can now be termed really and truly dead. It is interesting to note that it passed out of committee with a unanimous “do pass” recommendation only to die for lack of a floor vote.

EHB 3168 Providing Taxpayers additional protections for value changes passed out of the House on a unanimous 98-0-0-0 vote, and is now awaiting hearing scheduling in the Senate Government Operations & Elections committee. A friendly amendment on the House Floor was offered by bill sponsor Rep. Ed Orcutt that further clarified the right to appeal. We look forward to a speedy and successful hearing on the Senate side.

Still at issue is Fire Patrol Assessments. A hearing on Wednesday combined two bills, **SSB 6766** Concerning forest fire prevention and suppression offered by Senator Hargrove, and **SB 6837** Modifying the funding provisions for forest fire protection and emergency fire suppression offered by Senator Tom. About the only thing in common between the two bills is that they raise more funding, but from that point on the implementation issues are diametrically different. **SSB 6766** would create a base \$4.95 charge on all taxable real property parcels across the entire state, plus either a \$.27 West Side or a \$.29 East Side per acre charge on only the designated parcels. Since we have a little over 3 million Real property taxable parcels across the state, this would affect parcel counts dramatically.

SB 6837 takes a different tact. It would not expand the number of parcels much from the existing number, but it would increase dramatically both the base rate and the per acre rate, but at different levels depending upon location and actual wildfire suppression costs. This bill creates 3 different tiers of different base rates and per acres rates. The highest rate would be a flat assessment rate of \$68.50 per parcel and a per acre rate of \$1.08 for every acre over 50.

The amount of land encompassed by the tiers would be adjusted every 5 years based on history gathered of Fire suppression costs. In that context predictability and someone’s labor update all the assessments becomes a big issue. Undoubtedly, some type of Fire Patrol Assessment will spring forth from these two bills.

2SHB 1597 Concerning the administration of state and local tax programs passed on the House Floor 98-0-0-0. This is basically a DOR administrative bill, and seems to be working methodically through the system. Out of 114 pages, about the only thing that catches the Administrative Assessment side is the ability to now go up to 6 years for Senior Citizen Renewals, and the ability to collect back taxes on these same persons is increased from 3 years to 5 years. This bill awaits a hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.

Environment, Land Use & Resources

State Grants Available for Boating, Parks, Trails, Farmland Preservation, and Conservation

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) will begin accepting applications this spring for grants to build parks, trails and boating facilities and to conserve wildlife habitat and protect farmland.

This year, the office is offering grants in the categories below. Grant applications will be accepted March 1 through May 3, 2010. Workshops to help you determine which grant program is right for you are offered later this month.

- **Boating** – Funding to develop and renovate boating facilities or provide boater education programs aimed at larger, motor boats (26 feet and longer).

- **Parks** – Funding to acquire land and/or develop parks, ball fields, sports courts, outdoor swimming pools and waterfront access areas for the public.
- **Trails** – Funding to maintain and develop trails.
- **Farmland Preservation** – Funding to preserve valuable farmland.
- **Wildlife Habitat Conservation** – Funding to conserve significant natural areas or habitat for plants, animals, and other wildlife. This includes grants to protect areas along streams and waterways.

For more information about the grants available this year, visit the RCO Web site at:

http://www.rco.wa.gov/grants/grant_news.shtml

RCO administers 13 grant programs for activities such as building parks and trails, protecting wildlife habitat, conserving working farms and recovering salmon from near extinction. Since 1964, the office has granted nearly \$1.5 billion for more than 6,600 projects across the state.

Workshops

Not sure what grant program is right for you? RCO will hold workshops for those interested in applying for grants at the locations below. At the workshops, staff will explain what grants are being offered and how to qualify for them, and describe the application process.

February 23

Moses Lake

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Big Bend Community College

February 26

Tacoma

9 a.m.-3 p.m.

La Quinta Inn

Register at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DTPL33P>

Volunteers Needed to Evaluate Grant Proposals

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is looking for volunteers to help review and evaluate grant applications for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Volunteers are needed with the following expertise:

- Local government representatives with expertise in outdoor recreation.
- State government representatives with expertise in outdoor recreation or habitat conservation.
- Tribal government representatives with expertise in outdoor recreation.
- Citizens with knowledge of general recreation issues or experience in recreation and trail groups; conservation clubs; federal agencies; or recreational bicycle, equestrian, pedestrian trail or recreational water trail groups.
- Citizens with knowledge of biology, botany, ecology, fish and wildlife management, geology, natural resource management, watershed management and planning, or zoology, or experience in academia, acquisitions, agriculture, engineering, forestry, geomorphology, hydrology, lakes management, land use management, urban planning, or management of marine, freshwater, wetland, stream or river systems.

For more information or to volunteer, visit the Web site at http://www.rco.wa.gov/grants/grant_news.shtml#wwrp

General Government Issues

Apply for Prestigious Innovations Award

Harvard University invites you to submit your program or nominate an initiative for the *Innovations in American Government Award*.

Administered by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School, the Innovations Award is heralded as the premier public-sector award in the nation. It is given annually to programs that serve as examples of creative and effective government at its best.

This year the Innovations program has also launched a new initiative, *Bright Ideas*, designed to recognize and promote promising government programs and partnerships.

All units of government--federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial—from all policy areas are eligible to apply for recognition.

The top winner of the 2010 Innovations Award will receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication and dissemination activities. Top finalists will also receive monetary grants.

Applications and additional information for both initiatives are available on our website: www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu. **APPLICATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 7, 2010.**

Association News

Island County Treasurer Won't Run This Fall

by *Jessie Stensland, Whidbey News Times, 2/16, 2010*

Island County Treasurer Linda Riffe decided she won't seek re-election this year in order to spend more time with ailing family members.

Riffe already endorsed Chief Deputy Treasurer Ana Maria Nunez to fill her shoes. Nunez filed with the Public Disclosure Committee to run for the office as a Democrat.

"This is not the time for someone new," Riffe said. "Ana Maria will be able to step in and continue on without so much as a hiccup. She's got the enthusiasm, the youth and the energy."

The last year has been very difficult for Riffe, both professionally and personally. She lost both her parents. Her husband has been gravely ill for some time. Her daughter was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and recently lost the use of her legs.

During budget cuts in the last year and a half, the treasurer lost nearly half of her staff. She used to have 10 people, but now she's down to five full-time and one half-time employees.

Riffe, as the county's investment officer, has also dealt with plummeting interest rates, which drastically cut investment earnings and aggravated the county's budget problems. It's all made for a lot of late-night work.



Still, Riffe said she enjoys the challenges of the job and had a tough time making the decision to not run again. She said she accomplished much during her two terms in office. When Riffe, a Democrat, took office, the treasurer's office was behind the rest of the state in technology and had a long history of findings from the state auditor's office.

Riffe turned that ship around. She brought technological improvements to the office; for example, people can now pay their property taxes online. Since she started, the state auditor has consistently given her office a clean bill of health.

"I feel I've served honorably and well. That's important to me," she said.

Prior to running for public office, Riffe was an administrator at Oak Harbor High School and was a business and computer technology teacher for 17 years before that.

Being the treasurer is a big job. The treasurer is responsible for collecting real estate taxes and special assessments for the county, the cities and all the junior taxing districts in the county. The treasurer also collects excise taxes on the sale or transfer of real property, deposits and invests funds for the county and junior taxing districts, administers county debt financing and forecloses on property for delinquent taxes.

Besides the treasurer, seven other county positions will be on the ballot this fall. Island County Sheriff Mark Brown, Commissioner John Dean, Assessor Dave Mattens, Auditor Sheilah Crider have all filed for reelection. So far, Dean has the only challenger, with Camano Island resident Kelly Emerson running against him. The prosecuting attorney, clerk and coroner will also be on the ballot.

Training & Upcoming Events

Washington Counties – [wacounties.org/Calendar of Events](http://wacounties.org/Calendar%20of%20Events)

County Training Institute – www.countytraininginstitute.org

Planning & Facilitating Successful Meetings First Spring CTI Course Offering

You won't want to miss the March 19 County Training Institute course "Planning & Facilitating Successful Meetings" in Tukwila. Of course, if you do, there is another opportunity on May 25 in Ephrata!

The instructor, Paul Dzedzic of PDZ Consulting, has a wide range of experience assisting the public sector on policies, strategies, major initiatives, and successful meetings. In fact, Paul facilitated the WSAC Newly Elected Officials kick-off in December 2008 and more recently has worked with Island County Commissioners on strategy planning for the county.

For more information about this course see the attached flier, or the other Spring 2010 offerings, visit www.countytraininginstitute.org

"Our experience with Paul Dzedzic was positive and productive. He helped us find consensus and begin our transformation process. His earnest interest in our success, broad experience and professional facilitation skills created a positive climate for us to do this important work during a very stressful time for our organization. (We) highly recommend Paul to others and would not hesitate to use his services again." Island County

Courthouse Ramblings

Please note change to the Directory of County Officials in Washington State: Kitsap County Treasurer is now **Vicki Fick** and her e-mail is vfick@co.kitsap.wa.us.

Good Things

Tax History

The Davenport Times-Tribune reported 75 years ago that "...for 38 consecutive years, Fred Zuehlke, pioneer Davenport blacksmith, has been the first to appear at the county treasurer's office to pay his taxes and receive receipt No. 1. Despite his death last May, the family tradition carried on when his son Murray appeared at the treasurer's office long before 8:00 a.m. on the "opening day" and secured the coveted first tax receipt. The elder Zuehlke was depicted last July in one of Bob Ripley's "Believe it or not" cartoons. Fred Zuehlke's great-grandson is Scott Hutsell, Lincoln County Commissioner.

Attachments

Welcome to the U.S. Communities Purchasing & Finance Agency

(U.S. Communities) website <http://www.uscommunities.org/>

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), jointly sponsor the

U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance (U.S. Communities)

Designed in cooperation with an Advisory Board of local government purchasing officials, U.S. Communities pools the purchasing power of public agencies, achieves bulk volume discounts on behalf of public agencies, competitively solicits quality products through a lead public agency and provides a purchasing forum for public agencies nationwide.

You can obtain information on how to contact all U.S. Communities suppliers by telephoning (866) 472-7467 or by sending an email to info@uscommunities.org

U.S. Communities | 2175 North California Blvd., Suite 550, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

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"Results from our internal customer satisfaction survey show that our customers want two things from Purchasing. First save us time in the procurement process and second save us money. When Kansas City, Missouri uses a U.S. Communities contract we save both time and money for our customers."

Ray Burnett,
Commissioner of Purchases and Supplies
Kansas City, MO.



[HTTP://WWW.COUNTYTRAININGINSTITUTE.ORG](http://www.countytraininginstitute.org)

PLANNING & FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

Are your meetings as productive as they should be? This training gives you the tools necessary to plan and facilitate effective meetings from start to finish!

Course Objectives:

- Identify what to do before and during the meeting to ensure success
- Identify ideas and strategies for bringing out meeting attendees' best ideas
- Dealing with conflict
- Using an agenda to stay on track
- Share other ideas that work
- Demonstrate facilitation techniques and discuss how they can help make your meetings successful

Dates, Locations & Cost:

9 am to 4pm

March 19, 2010—Tukwila
WA Cities Insurance Authority
(WCIA) Building

or

May 25, 2010—Ephrata
Grant County Public Works

\$120 for members of WSAC,
WACO, WCRP and CRAB

\$135 for non-members

Instructor: Paul Dzedzic, PDZ Consulting

For more than 15 years, Paul Dzedzic has assisted policy makers and those working to impact policy decisions with strategy consultation and facilitation on major initiatives in the areas of alcohol and substance abuse prevention and treatment, mental health transformation, government reorganization, workforce development, use and protection of natural resources, contracting processes, improving laws and programs for people with developmental disabilities, and many other policy initiatives.

Island County recently received WSAC grant funds for facilitation resources in 2009; their comments: "Our experience with Paul Dzedzic was positive and productive. He helped us find consensus and begin our transformation process. His earnest interest in our success, broad experience and professional facilitation skills created a positive climate for us to do this important work during a very stressful time for our organization. (We) highly recommend Paul to others and would not hesitate to use his services again."



This course qualifies for 4 Elective Certified Public Official (CPO) credits; a certificate will be awarded.
Please visit www.countytraininginstitute.org to register and for more details.

