



FINAL 2016

Late last night the Legislature finally adjourned “Sine Die,” ending a nearly three-week Special Session. The primary accomplishment was passage of Supplemental Operating and Capital Budgets, which made marginal spending increases in areas such as mental health funding and wildfire costs.

For ports, the news was very good on our top priority for the Session. The Legislature addressed the shortfall in hazardous site cleanup grants under MTCA, providing about 95% of the funding requested for cleanup grants. This is a huge improvement to where we were when the Session began, when the program was essentially zeroed out due to a revenue shortfall. This was accomplished with a combination of re-prioritizing revenues, and cuts elsewhere. The long-term health of the cleanup accounts remains a concern, but we also made significant progress in educating key legislators on the importance of this program. Thank you to all of the ports who worked hard on this issue – your efforts paid off.

In other budget news, proposed cuts to the Municipal Research Services Center (MRSC) were avoided, and this important program remains funded at requested levels. Also, earlier versions of the budget contained a proviso that directed an additional study of local government costs complying with the Public Records Act, but the final budget left this proviso out.

In addition, we successfully secured budget language that requires the Department of Ecology, in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, to complete a management review of the Dredged Material Management Program.

In the final analysis, the Special Session did not make significant changes to the budget passed last year. Wildfire costs were paid from the “emergency” fund, mental health programs were increased, and some funding was increased for homeless programs. The Public Works Assistance Account was raided once-again, and effectively eliminated. Teacher pay raises and most other education-related issues were postponed until next year. No new taxes were or other revenue streams were created.

A supplemental transportation budget was signed into law by the Governor last week, which embraces a principal 2016 Session goal to fund and develop an actionable, priority-driven freight strategy. This proviso also enhances opportunity for ports and other freight stakeholders to participate in the state transportation planning process. Additionally, the budget holds newly created federal FAST Act freight funds in unappropriated status to allow this stakeholder group opportunity direct the expenditure toward project development. These dollars, which could add eight additional freight projects per biennium, required segregation so that they could fund freight capacity rather than be consumed by maintenance work.

Thank you once again to all of you who pitched-in from your districts at key points this year. Your Olympia staff appreciates each of you, as we close the books on the 2016 Legislature.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions concerning port-related issues from this past session, please contact Eric Johnson, Ginger Eagle, Gerry O’Keefe, James Thompson or Brandi Vena at 360-943-0760.

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