

Courthouse Journal

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Washington State Association of Counties
Washington Association of County Officials

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Inside the Courthouse Journal

Budget, Finance & Taxes
Pages 2 - 3

Law & Justice, Courts
Pages 4 - 5

**Transportation and
Public Works**
Page 6

Good Things
Page 6

**Environment, Land Use
and Resources**
Pages 7 - 8

**Elections, Recording
and Licensing**
Page 8

**General Government
and Miscellaneous**
Page 9

Upcoming Events and Training

See Page 9

TVW Celebrates County Government Week

In recognition of County Government week, Denny Heck, Executive Director of TVW and interviewer *extraordinaire*, will be featuring county government on his *Inside Olympia* show next week. *Inside Olympia* is an engaging discussion program typically featuring legislators, reporters, and others with an interesting point of view of state government. Thanks in advance to the County Commissioners and the Councilman who are participating in the discussion about counties and what role they play in our social and political lives.

The April 11, 2002 show will feature King County Councilman Rob McKenna, Franklin County Commissioner Neva Corkrum, Grant County Commissioner Deborah

Moore, and Clark County Commissioner Craig Pridemore. The show will air on the TVW network on Thursday, April 11 at 7 p. m. and 11 p. m., Saturday, April 13 at 10 p. m., and Sunday, April 7 at 10 a. m. and 6 p. m. The show also can be viewed on the TVW website at www.tvw.org. Check the website for additional viewing times.

(If you would like information about National County Government Week, visit the NACo Web site at: www.naco.org. Send information about your county's activities to Tom Goodman, Director of Public Affairs, at tgoodman@naco.org.)

Need a Ride? Call Rosario

Those attending the Western District Meeting at Rosario may want to leave their cars on the mainland and take advantage of the Rosario Shuttle service. Rosario is offering its shuttle for only \$5 per passenger. Call Rosario 72 hours in advance of your arrival at Orcas Landing to arrange for the shuttle. The phone number is (360) 376-2222.

Fire Patrol Meeting with DNR

Jack Westerman, Jefferson County Assessor, Rose Bowman, Lewis County Treasurer, a WACO Associate and staff from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) met to discuss implementation of **SHB 2104**, which was passed by the 2001 Legislature. Members of DNR staff included Judy Wilson, Randy Acker, Judie Cline, and Kerin Elder. The discussion surrounded how DNR interpreted the various aspects of this legislation.

SHB 2104 allows owners with multiple

The Courthouse Journal

The Courthouse Journal is published weekly by the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) and the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC).

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

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parcels subject to fire patrol in a single county to apply to DNR for a multi-parcel exemption. This is an exemption rather than the current refund program. Previous to the passage of this legislation, timber owners had to pay both the first and second half assessment prior to applying for a refund. Owners did not like DNR keeping their money for almost a year before refunding it back to timber owners in the form of a refund. This bill would allow those owners to apply to DNR for a multi-parcel exemption, and the assessment would be computed on the total acreage. They must do this on an application listing all parcels less than 50 acres owned in a single county. DNR would then compute the assessment for all parcels combined and identify a single parcel to bill. This is to be implemented over the next five years. The first year would be for owners of 10 or more but under 50-acre parcels.

The questions and answers discussed are as follows:

Q: What about multi-county owners?

A: The bill applies only to multi-parcel owners in the same county and to parcels under 50 acres in size.

Q: Is combining the parcels for a multi-parcel exemption available to all taxpayers?

A: Only if the owner applies to have parcels combined for the exemption.

Q: What about ownership that is the same, but with different names, i.e. John Smith, John S. Smith, John & Mary Smith?

A: Those are not the same legal ownership. All John Smith parcels can be combined, all John S. Smith parcels can be combined and all John & Mary Smith parcels can be combined, but the three different legal ownerships can not be combined. There is a concern regarding Washington being a community property state.

Q: DNR is required, as stated in the bill, to designate which parcel is billed and how the assessment will be handled. Has DNR determined how this will be done?

A: DNR is developing the criteria for this decision. Assessors could have in-

put, or DNR field foresters will review and pick one parcel.

Q: Can DNR certify fire patrol assessments annually to all counties?

A: DNR field foresters are working with Assessors/Treasurers to accomplish this task. We will continue to work with DNR to accomplish this certification annually to all counties.

Q: Who's responsible for paying the programming or additional staff cost to the counties of implementing the program over the next five years?

A: The \$0.50 per parcel given to the counties to collect the assessment should be used for this purpose.

Q: What about the benefit not following the parcel?

A: DNR will be enacting the legislation as written. A law passed by the legislature is deemed to be legal and constitutional until proven otherwise by the courts.

Q: What if a parcel designated as the "billable" parcel is sold—how would the assessment be divided amongst the other parcels?

A: As described in the law, it is the landowner's responsibility to notify DNR of any changes in ownership.

Q: What if a parcel not designated as the "billable" parcel is sold—how would the assessment be divided back to this parcel?

A: DNR may be losing money if this happens. The landowner is responsible to notify DNR of any landowner changes.

Q: Since the bill (page 4, line 16) requires the assessment to be a lien upon the property protected, how does that work?

A: Until it is challenged, no one knows.

Q: Who is responsible for notifying DNR of change in ownership?

A: The owner is responsible. DNR is developing a letter that would go out each year to all owners who had applied for the multi-parcel combination the previous year.

(Continued on page 3)

Budget, Finance and Taxes

(Continued from page 2)

Q: Are all parcels subject to the multi-parcel exemption provision?

A: No, only parcels less than 50 acres are. Larger parcels (greater than 50 acres) can not be combined with smaller ones to obtain the exemption.

Q: Is DNR considering writing WAC rules to clarify the administration of the legislation?

A: No.

Q: Would DNR consider billing and collecting the fire patrol assessment within their agency?

A: No. They have no billing or collection procedures in place.

Q: How many parcels do you expect to submit the application for the multi-parcel exemption as a result of the legislation?

A: Based on 2001 Refunds:

2002 10 or more 576 or 3.94% of total parcels

2003 8 or 9 223 or 1.52% of total parcels

2004 6 or 7 606 or 4.14% of total parcels

2005 4 or 5 2025 or 13.85%

2006 2 or 3 11,195 or 76.55%

Based on Potential Refunds:

2002 10 or more 1,369

2003 8 or 9 530

2004 6 or 7 1,440

2005 4 or 5 4,812

2006 2 or 3 26,601

There will be further discussions surrounding this program at both the Assessors and Treasurer Affiliate meetings this summer. We will also have a joint Assessor/Treasurer session at our annual WACO Conference this October. One issue will be whether or not counties can wait until December 1 to receive the assessments from DNR.

Remember: this legislation applies only to parcels less than 50 acres! If you would like to read a copy of the bill, you

can download it at www.leg.wa.gov, or call WACO and we will fax you a copy. Only the portions of the bill that are underlined represent the changes to existing law.

Governor Signs E-911 Wireless Bill—Now It Is Counties' Turn to Act

In a small, brief ceremony that belied the long, hard work of dozens of people over several years, Gov. Gary Locke signed **HB 2595**, which increases the monthly tax on cell phones to help ensure enhanced 911 service for wireless calls.

Beginning January 2003, the bill imposes a statewide 20-cent tax per cell phone per month and authorizes counties to increase their cell phone tax to 50 cents per month. All counties now collect 25 cents per cell phone per month. The increased funding is intended to improve E-911 response to calls from cell phones. Currently call-back numbers and location information—routine with land-line calls—are not available for calls from cell phones.

The state has completed its work on this legislation; now counties can move forward with their component. Any county council or board of commissioners that wants to begin collecting the additional 25 cents per cell phone needs to pass an ordinance adopting the tax increase. (Note that this is a councilmanic action and does not go on the ballot.) To begin collecting the additional amount in January 2003, the county must adopt its ordinance no later than October 2002, in order to provide a required 60-day notice of the tax increase to cell phone companies and their customers.

Some public-education materials that may be of assistance to counties as they begin the ordinance process are available from WSAC staff Sophia Byrd at sbyrd@wacounties.org or (360) 753-1886. County 911 coordinators, emergency management directors, and the state E-911 office are excellent resources for a variety of data and other information.

Numerous county commissioners and sheriffs were especially supportive of **HB 2595**, traveling several times to Olympia to testify before legislative committees. Many thanks to them and others who supported and actively worked the bill. Unfortunately, few could attend the April 3 bill signing. Also unable to attend were the bill's prime sponsor, Rep. Jeff Morris of Skagit County, and prime sponsor of a Senate companion bill, Sen. Karen Fra-

ser of Thurston County. Longtime E-911 supporter Sen. Sid Snyder of Pacific County did attend the bill signing and was given the governor's pen used to sign the bill.

New Sales Tax Authority for Emergency Communications

The governor has signed **HB 1477**, which authorizes an additional one-tenth of one percent local-option sales tax to help pay for a variety of projects and activities associated with emergency communications.

While the bill often has been described as a funding tool for construction of facilities and acquisition of equipment, it is much more. Section 1 of the bill provides that moneys received from the additional sales tax may be used for "financing, design, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, re-equipping, and improvement of emergency communication systems and facilities." This very broad purpose could include such things as a seismic retrofit of the dispatch center, purchase of new police radios, equipment upgrades, and salary assistance for 911 call takers.

Unlike the E-911 wireless excise tax (see article above), voters must approve this sales tax increase. Several counties have indicated they will pursue the sales tax because they believe the purpose is popular with voters, and because it will move some critical and costly services out of the county general fund.

Drug Sentencing Committees Need County Representation

HB 2338, which reduces prison sentences for certain drug offenses and directs the prison savings to drug treatment, establishes several committees to help implement the landmark legislation. The bill specifies WSAC representation on three committees that will review drug-sentencing provisions and distribute up to \$8.2 million annually to counties for offender treatment programs, including drug court.

Because of the integrated and somewhat overlapping nature of the committees, a single individual serving on all the committees might best represent

WSAC. Any WSAC member seeking the position should submit a letter of interest to the WSAC Board of Directors by May 15. The Board will appoint a representative at its June meeting. Committee members are not paid, but are eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses.

Following is an overview of the committees' functions. For more detail, see the bill at www.leg.wa.gov.

- The Joint Select Committee on the Drug Offense Sentencing Grid will review and make recommendations by June 1, 2003, regarding a new Drug Offense Sentencing Grid. Among other things, the committee shall establish a methodology for determining fiscal consequences to the state and local governments, examine racial disproportionality issues, recommend a statewide method of evaluating drug court success, review and revise criteria for funding treatment programs, and review and recommend changes in distribution of funds for offender treatment. The group will have strong staff support from the Sentencing Guidelines Commission, the Caseload Forecast Council, and the Legislature.
- Seventy-five percent of the money saved from reduced prison sentences will be appropriated to the state Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA), to be distributed to counties. DASA, serving as the fiscal agency for distribution of the county treatment funds, is establishing a committee to develop the county distribution formula. This formula will distribute 70 percent of the local treatment funds. More detail on this function likely will be available in mid-April, according to DASA staff.
- The remaining 30 percent of local treatment funds are to be distributed to counties as grants. The grant awards will be determined by a panel of stakeholders that review plans submitted by counties or groups of counties. DASA also will provide more information on this process in a few weeks.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Free Satellite Conference Addresses Mental Illness in Jails

As county officials in this state know, jails have experienced a dramatic rise in the number of inmates exhibiting symptoms of serious mental illness. Many jails are ill-equipped to manage this population and have limited resources for providing services.

To help address these issues, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has scheduled a live interactive satellite/internet video conference for April 17, 2002. Please register by April 15 at the NIC's web site at www.nicic.org. Participating sites that register by April 15 will be able to download satellite coordinates and internet access information as well as an agenda, handouts, and recommended reading materials. Participants also may call in questions via a toll-free telephone number displayed on the screen during the conference.

The event is intended to help participants better understand the issues, identify essential components for managing mentally ill inmates, understand creative approaches to meeting inmates' mental health needs, and identify potential resources to help jails better serve mentally ill inmates.

The video conference is available at no charge to any agency or facility nationwide with access to the internet or

satellite dish or downlink (C-band or KU-band transponder).

Correctional agencies may be able to obtain a free satellite dish by contacting Anne Charles at (800) 531-4288.

Feds Announce "Serious, Violent Offender Reentry Initiative"

Several federal agencies, under the leadership of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs, are announcing applications for the "Serious, Violent Offender Reentry Initiative."

This grant program is designed to address the issues related to violent offenders being released from correctional facilities into communities. The program aims to reduce recidivism by these returning offenders and thus enhance community safety.

Eligible applicants are states, local jurisdictions, or tribes that represent a partnership between institutional and community corrections agencies.

Although some new grants will be awarded, the focus of the initiative is not "new money." Rather, the federal partners are identifying funds from their respective agencies that are already available and suitable for the purposes of the initiative. The goal is to fund at least one sustainable program in each state. Each site would receive approximately \$500,000 to \$2 million.

Application information is available

by calling the DOJ at (800) 421-6770 or online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/solicitation/solicitation.html. The application deadline is May 15.

OJJDP Title II Formula Grant

The Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC) has announced the release of a new Request for Proposals (RFP). Proposals for the grants program for runaways and youth in conflict are due May 6, 2002. The RFP can be found on the GJJAC website at www.wa.gov/juvenilejustice; call (360) 407-0151 for a hard copy.

The Governor Takes Action on the Transportation Revenue Packages

The governor took action on three bills that may provide both a regional and statewide transportation package to the voters. The \$7.7 billion dollar statewide proposal will be offered to the voters this November. The statewide proposal is package into two bills, **ESHB 2969**, which outlines the financing and is a referendum to the people, and **ESSB 6347**,

which outlines how the new funding will be spent. The regional transportation revenue package, **ESSB 6140**, authorizes King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties to establish a regional transportation proposal to take to the voters. The voters in all three counties have the potential to raise as much as \$5.1 billion during the next 10 years. Ninety percent of the funds raised may be used for “highways of statewide significance” (HSS), and 10 percent may be used for principal arterials that can dem-

onstrate that they provide the same congestion relief as an HSS. **ESSB 6140** was passed with a “null and void” clause if no new statewide revenue was approved by January 1, 2003, but the governor vetoed that section of the bill. Please see the attached summaries for more detail.

Good Things

Walla Walla Named One of the Best Places to Live

In the March 2002 issue of *Sunset Magazine*, Walla Walla, Washington was determined to be one of the best places in the West to live, based on criteria that included good architecture, vibrant downtowns, handsome trees—and, most of all, a caring community.

In particular, Walla Walla was named “Best Main Street.” The article, written by Lawrence Cheek, looks at Walla Walla in the 1970s when the downtown area experienced a dramatic slump in the economy. Three of four department stores fled, and a

major landmark—the Marcus Whitman, a 12-story luxury hotel built in 1927—went condo. However, Walla Walla retained critical assets, including Whitman College, a wine industry that grew from a few vines in 1977 to 34 wineries today, and the most important component—a nucleus of people who cared. Today downtown Walla Walla holds renovated Victorian commercial buildings. It has retained the Bon Marché department store (partly housed in the 1917 Liberty Theater) and has attracted serious wineries and tasting bars. Finally, last spring, after a \$35 million renovation, the Marcus Whitman reopened to the public.

Mr. Cheek states in the close of his article, “Real character is impossible to fake. It grows from within. Walla Walla, which Theodore Roosevelt might well praise today, proves it.” Congratulations Walla Walla!

The Governor Signs GMA Timelines bill into Law

The Growth Management Timeline bill (SSB 5841) will become law June 13, 2002. The governor signed the bill in total this week after making a few statements about how this bill will assist local governments.

SSB 5841 delays mandatory September 2002 GMA updates (including critical area ordinances) in all cities and counties. The bill also specifies that subsequent updates shall occur every seven years rather than the current requirement for every five years. The update extensions in the bill are as follows:

- December 2004 for King, Pierce, Snohomish, Kitsap, Clark, Thurston, Jefferson, Clallam, and Whatcom Counties
- December 2005 for Cowlitz, Island, Lewis, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, and Skamania Counties.
- December 2006 for Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Spokane, and Yakima Counties.
- December 2007 for Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla, and Whitman Counties.

In addition, the bill:

- Allows any county/city required to update by December 2004 to skip the first required update if one was finalized after January 1, 2001, but before the December 2004 required date.
- Does not add any new planning requirements or definitions/references to best available science.
- Makes clear that cities and counties must hold a public hearing to decide what updates, if any, are appropriate for local plans and regulations.
- Restates current law provisions describing state funds that cannot be accessed if a city or county is out of compliance with GMA, including the review and update requirement.

Please contact Jackie White, WSAC staff, for more information or comments.

U.S. Supreme Court Leaves Skamania County in Driver's Seat

The U.S. Supreme Court this week denied the Columbia River Gorge Commission's request to review a Washington State Court of Appeals decision upholding a Skamania County land use policy. The Gorge Commission sought review because it believed the Court of Appeals interpreted the National Scenic Area Compact and its Management Plan in a way that could lead to different land use rules being applied to Washington and Oregon portions of the Scenic Area.

The case arose when Chris Woodall, an adjacent property owner, appealed a Skamania County decision allowing expansion of a trailer park, claiming the facility was a "discontinued" use. The Gorge Commission determined Skamania County applied Washington state law instead of the long-standing Scenic Area interpretation of the discontinued standard. The Court of Appeals' decision remanded the case back to the Gorge Commission to decide whether the trailer park was discontinued under Washington law.

The state of Oregon and the Delaware River Port Authority filed briefs in support of the Gorge Commission's petition to the Supreme Court. Two of the initial drafters of the Scenic Area legislation, former U.S. Senators Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon and Daniel J. Evans of Washington, also filed briefs supporting the Gorge Commission.

DNR Debates Tree Cutting

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently working out how many trees to cut on state trust land over the next decade, and they want your input. Last year the state cut about 550 million board feet of timber, netting \$281 million for schools and counties. Especially in rural areas, both rely heavily on state timber money. DNR is currently doing its 10-year calculation of how much timber should be cut on state lands to benefit the public trusts while keeping the forests healthy and productive for future generation.

DNR will decide the harvest level for 1.2 million acres in Western Washington in July 2003, and will study East-

ern Washington after that.

The public comment period on sustainable harvest ends April 10, although comments are welcome after that at any of the Board of Natural Resources' monthly meetings. To comment, see the DNR website: <http://www.wa.gov/dnr> or e-mail john.baarsppulwadnr.gov. Written comments can be sent to P.O. Box 47016, Olympia, WA 98504-7016.

Timber Counties—Upcoming Meetings on PL 106-393 and PILT

WSAC is planning four regional meetings to cover Public Law 106-393 (PL 106-393), also known as the "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000." The primary purpose of the meetings will be to address concerns regarding the implementation of the law, Title II and III allocation choices, and the effect thereof on Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). All county personnel directly involved with the implementation of this law are encouraged to attend one of the meetings. The Western regional meetings are scheduled for May 9 (Everett) and 10 (Olympia); the Eastern meetings are currently set for May 29 (Ellensburg) and 30 (Spokane). Meeting locations and times to be announced in the *Courthouse Journal* later this month.

Big Demand for Water Quality Funding

The Department of Ecology reports that the most recent application process for water quality funding resulted in 121 loan and grant applications. A total of \$14.5 million in grants was requested with only \$12.5 million in funding available. There was \$131 million in loan funds requested with only \$127 million in funding available.

The decision process for the funding cycle will make the draft award list available, with the start of a 30-day public review, on June 18, 2002. The final list will be available August 20, 2002.

Ecology expects a serious funding shortfall in the 2003-05 biennium, in the range of \$22M-\$25M, for water quality programs. Grants may not be available.

(Continued on page 8)

Environment, Land Use and Resources

(Continued from page 7)

Ecology's Water Quality Financial Assistance Council is discussing what Best Management Practice (BMP) work is grant/loan eligible. According to Donald Gatchalian, a Yakima County representative on the Council, the following is a sampling of topics under discussion:

Traditional Activity Project BMPs (grant eligible):

Grassed Waterways
Irrigation Water Management
Permanent Vegetative Cover
Public Education
Riparian Fencing
Septic System Surveys

Storm Drain Stenciling
Grass Lined Swales

Traditional Facility Project BMPs (loan eligible):

Animal Waste Storage
Animal Waste Distribution Systems
Animal Waste Transfer
Conventional Wastewater Treatment
Chemigation Systems
Irrigation Enclosed Conduit
Irrigation Ditch Lining
Septic System Repair/Replacement
Streambank Stabilization (Engineered)

Ineligible Projects or Practices (not loan/grant eligible). Some of these projects are eligible for funding from other fund

source like the Salmon Recovery Fund (SRF), etc.:

Subsoiling
Increased Surface Residue
Reservoir Tillage Operations
Chemical Fallow Operations
Cross Fencing to Restrict Range Animal Movement
Land Acquisition/leases/easements

The Water Quality Financial Assistance Council meets every two months. The next meeting is Tuesday, June 4, 2002 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Elections, Recording and Licensing

WSACA Licensing Conference

Registration forms and agendas for the WSACA Licensing Conference are in the mail! The conference will take place May 8-9 in conjunction with the Auditors' Annual Conference at the Red Lion Inn in Port Angeles. Registration deadline for the conference is April 19, 2002. If you need a copy of the agenda or registration form,

please contact WACO at (360) 753-7319 or e-mail bbamford@wacounties.org

County Auditors

SHB 2060, which increases the recording fee by \$10, was signed by the governor on April 2, 2002, despite concerns from State agencies over the increased costs of filing documents. The effective date is June 13,

2002, and the bill can be found in Chapter 294 of the 2002 Session Laws.

General Government and Miscellaneous

New Web Pages

(Submitted by Municipal Research & Services Center)

Washington State Supreme and Appellate Court Opinions is provided in cooperation with the Washington State Bar Association and the Washington State Office of the Code Reviser. Contains full-text access to the Washington State Supreme Court opinions from 1939 to the present and published Court of Appeals opinions from 1969 to the present. The decisions are in the form of advance sheets (not the final official decisions), and for the most recent decisions, slip opinions. The Web site address is: www.legalwa.org.

Courts contains links to federal, Washington state and local courts, and court-related organizations. Web site address is: <http://www.mrsc.org/pubsafe/courts/courts.htm>.

Purchasing and Bidding for Washington State Local Governments includes content, charts, and sample/model documents on purchasing and/or bidding for supplies, materials, equipment, services, A&E services and public works projects. Included are bid limits, exemp-

tions, sales and use taxes, bonds, and retainage and statutory requirements. The Web site address is: <http://www.mrsc.org/pubworks/pb/pb.htm>.

Sources of Economic and Demographic Information by County lists information sources for the county, and cities and towns within the county. Also lists major organizations providing economic development services: port districts, economic development councils, districts, and chambers of commerce. The Web site address is: <http://www.mrsc.org/econ/ed-data.htm>.

Regulation of Fences, Hedges and Retaining Walls provides ordinance provisions, citizen information brochures, and permit application forms from Washington counties and cities. The Web site address is: <http://www.mrsc.org/planning/fences.htm>.

Recent Publications

- *2002–2003 Directory of Washington City and Town Officials*, Washington, February 2000
- *Model Traffic Ordinance*, Report No. 55, April 2000

New Staff Member

Don Edlin joined MRSC in March in the capacity of Web developer/E-government Specialist. As a member of MRSC's Web team, Don is responsible for Web application and database programming. Watch for many new features on this site in the coming months. Don will also assist local governments in implementing their own e-government programs. A graduate of Whitworth College, Don has worked for Safeco, Internet start-up companies, and most recently, for Boeing.

Questions: Contact the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington at mrsc@mrsc.org or call (800) 933-6772.

Upcoming Events and Training

Upcoming Training/Don't Miss Out...

If you have not registered for the upcoming workshops "**Public Meetings, Public Disclosure and More—Do You Know the Rules?**", dig out your announcement, fill it out, and send it back to the WSAC office. If you are in need of additional information, please call WSAC at (360) 753-1886 or check out <http://www.wacounties.org/wsac/CPO%20Training/index.htm>.

Environmental Summit on the West Features National and State Leaders

The Western Governors' Association and the White House Council on Environmental Quality will co-sponsor the Second Environmental Summit on the West in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 24–26, 2002, to advance successful approaches for addressing tough environmental and natural resource issues.

Governors will be joined by key administration officials and other dignitaries,

including Secretary of Interior Gale Norton; Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman; White House Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton; and Fred Krupp, Executive Director, Environmental Defense.

Participants will not only learn about successful on-the-ground strategies being employed across the West and nation, but will also participate in breakout sessions with government leaders to develop recommendations on key issues. Topics include:

- Species conservation while assisting landowners in maintaining working landscapes
- Meeting growing and competing demands for water
- Expanding the use of renewable energy resources
- Cooperative siting of interstate energy infrastructure
- Reducing wild land fire risks to communities while restoring forest health
- Industrial environmental innovation:

value for the community, globe and bottom line

- Assessing Western perspectives on multi-pollutant proposals for utilities and carbon dioxide strategies
- Successful partnerships and new tools to conserve open lands

The first Environmental Summit on the West was held in Phoenix in December 1998. With the assistance of hundreds of stakeholders who participated in the interactive sessions, the governors adopted the eight principles of Enlibra for making progress on complex environmental and natural resource management problems. Since then, the principles have been adopted as a guiding philosophy and incorporated into the work of small community groups; large corporations; and state, tribal, regional, and federal organizations and institutions.

"The Bush Administration is pleased to join the Western Governors' Association in sponsoring this Second Environmental Summit on the West," said White House CEQ Chairman James L. Connaughton.

(Continued on page 10)

Upcoming Events and Training

(Continued from page 9)

"The President is committed to working in partnership with tribal, state and local governments, as well as private citizens, organizations and businesses to foster stewardship and advance our common environ-

mental goals. Gatherings such as this are an important opportunity to share ideas and experiences that may guide future environmental conservation policies."

The Environmental Summit on the West will be held at the Little America Ho-

tel. Additional information on the meeting is available on the WGA Web site at www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/enlibra/summit_II.

Courthouse Ramblings

The Grant County Sheriff's Office is starting a Citizen Academy for residents who want to learn how the agency operates

and, perhaps, lend a hand. The three-hour classes will be held every Wednesday evening for eight weeks beginning June 5.

Calendar of Events

April 11–12

WSAC Western District Meeting,
Rosario Resort, San Juan County

April 23

Basic Contract Training, sponsored by
the Washington Association of Prosecut-
ing Attorneys (WAPA), Rodeway Inn,
Leavenworth, 8:00 a.m. to
4:30 p.m.

April 25-26

WSAC Eastern District Meeting, Sun
Mountain Lodge, Winthrop

May 1

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the
Rules?* Ellensburg—Cost: \$50 CPO
Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

May 2

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the
Rules?* Davenport—Cost: \$50 CPO
Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

May 3

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the Rules?* Richland—
Cost: \$50 CPO Credits: 2 (Elective
Course)

May 6–10

Washington State Association of County
Auditors' Annual Conference, Red Lion,
Port Angeles

May 8

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the Rules?* Mt. Vernon—
Cost: \$50 CPO Credits: 2 (Elective
Course)

May 9

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the Rules?* Tacoma—
Cost: \$50 CPO Credits: 2 (Elective
Course)

May 10

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Public
Meetings, Public Disclosure and More:
Do You Know the Rules?* Kelso—Cost:
\$50 CPO Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

May 15–17

ACHS, Spokane

May 20–23

Washington State Association of Sher-
iffs & Police Chiefs' (WASPC) Spring
Conference, WestCoast Wenatchee Cen-
ter Hotel, Wenatchee

May 22–24

WIR, Yellowstone County, Billings MT

June 15

American Board of Medicolegal Death
Investigators certification testing, 8:00 a.
m. - noon, Room 2605, Mt. Hood Com-
munity College, Gresham, OR.

June 16–19

Government Finance Officers' Associa-
tion (GFOA) Annual Conference, Den-
ver, Colorado

June 17

WSALPHO Meeting in conjunction with
WSAC Summer Convention, Bellevue

June 17–20

Washington State Association of County
Assessors' Annual Conference, Rosario
Resort, Orcas Island

June 18

WCIF Board in conjunction with WSAC
Summer Conference, 10:00 a.m.–noon,
Bellevue

June 18

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Finan-
cial Management: Understanding
County Government Financing*, Belle-
vue—Cost: \$120, CPO Credits: 4 (Core
Course). An additional elective course
will also be offered at the Summer Con-
vention, topic TBD

June 18–21

WSAC Summer Convention, Bellevue

June 18–21

Association of Washington Cities
(AWC) Annual Conference, Yakima

June 19–21

Washington State Association of Prose-
cuting Attorneys' (WAPA) Summer
Training Program, Campbell's Lodge,
Chelan

June 22–26

National Sheriffs Association's Annual
Conference, Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 24–28

Washington State Association of County
Clerks' Annual Conference, Best West-
ern Suites, Walla Walla

June 24–28

Washington State Association of County
Treasurers' Annual Conference, Lake-
way Inn, Bellingham

July 9–12

Northwest Regional Election Conference
2002, Jantzen Beach Doubletree Hotel,
Portland

July 12–16

NACo Annual Conference, New Orleans
Parish, New Orleans, LA

July 17–19

ACHS, Clark County

July 24

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Wash-
ington Counties Risk Pool—Leadership
Skills in Response to Current Issues*,
Spokane—Cost: Free to Risk Pool
Members, \$50 non-members, CPO
Credits: 4 (Elective Course)

August 22

WCIP Board/Rate Setting Session, 9:00
a.m.–3:00 p.m. SeaTac

September 10–13

City/County Planning Directors, Lake
Chelan

September 12

WSALPHO Meeting, Spokane

September 18–20

ACHS, Leavenworth

September 19

WCIF/WCIP Boards/Insurance Advi-
sory Committee (All Day Meeting),
SeaTac

September 30–October 4

WACO/WSAC Annual Conference,
WestCoast Wenatchee Hotel, Wenatchee

October 1

(Continued on page 12)

Calendar of Events

(Continued from page 11)

Certified Public Official (CPO) *Personnel/Human Resources—Understand the Laws; Maximize Your Personnel System*, Wenatchee—Cost: \$120, CPO Credits: 4 (Core Course)

October 2
Certified Public Official (CPO) *The Class-Act County Government Official—Building Courthouse Partnerships*, Wenatchee—Cost TBD, CPO Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

November 14
WCIF Board Meeting, 9:00 a.m.–noon, Eastern Washington Location

November 18–21
Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs' (WASPC) Annual Fall Conference, Red Lion Hotel at the Quay, Vancouver

November 20–22
ACHS, Seattle
December 5

WSALPHO Meeting, SeaTac

December 10–13
Certified Public Official (CPO) *Newly Elected Officials Training—Understanding Your New Job at the Courthouse*, Olympia—Cost: TBD, CPO Credits: All newly elected officials **must** attend to become certified

2003 MEETINGS

June 24–27, 2003
WSAC Summer Convention, Spokane
July 11–15, 2003
NACo Annual Conference, Milwaukee County, Milwaukee, WI

September 29–October 3, 2003
Joint WACO/WSAC Conference, Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport

2004 MEETINGS

June 22–25, 2004
WSAC Summer Convention, Sheraton Tacoma, Pierce County
July 16–20, 2004

NACo Annual Conference Maricopa County, Phoenix, AZ

October 4–8, 2004
WACO/WSAC Joint Legislative Conference, WestCoast Grand Hotel at the Park, Spokane

2005 MEETINGS

July 15–19, 2005
NACo Annual Conference, City & County of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI

Employment Opportunities

ASSET/LIABILITY MANAGER - CLARK COUNTY, VANCOUVER, WA. (\$4,296-\$6,070/mo). Supervises and coordinates Treasurer's Office cash management, investment and debt management programs. Manages the cash flow liquidity needs; monitors and analyzes potential bond calls; prepares financial schedules, notes, presentations and reports. Coordinates customer service effort toward the county departments and junior taxing districts for cash management, investment and debt services; monitors internal controls around investment purchases, sales and safe-keeping; monitors and reports debt service activity requirements. Bachelor's degree in accounting, business or public administration or related field and four years increasingly responsible accounting, banking, investment and debt management experience. Detailed position information and applications available at <<http://www.co.clark.wa.us/>> www.clark.wa.gov and Clark County HR, 1013 Franklin Street, Vancouver, WA. (360)397-6018; TDD (360)397-6032. Equal Opportunity Employer

EXPERIENCED PROGRAMMER/ANALYST to provide technical expertise to users and staff members in the areas of development, business administration, database and website development. Applicants must have a BS/BA in computer-related field and three years of related experience; or any equivalent combination of education and experience, which would provide the applicant with the necessary skills, knowledge and ability to perform essential functions of the position. Experience in a programmer/analyst mode utilizing Visual Basic, C, C++, Java, HTML (or code generator), SQL - PL/SQL, and project management software preferred. Development experience using Oracle Tools is desirable. \$51,625.60 to \$59,779.20, DOQ.

Benefits include paid vacation and sick leave, medical for employee and dependents, and excellent retirement plan. The county pays for continuing professional training as it relates to each position. The county welcomes those applicants who are seeking an escape from the "pressure cooker" environment.

Please visit our website at: www.kitsapgov.com/jobline where application

packets may be downloaded or contact Kitsap County Personnel at 614 Division St., MS-23, Port Orchard, WA 98366-4676 or (360) 337-7185, ext. "0." Application deadline is 4:30 pm April 26, 2002. Kitsap County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR - SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON. Salary: \$70,000-\$95,000

Requires a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, Business Administration or related field and five years experience in government administration, financial management, human resource management or related areas or any equivalent combination which provides the required skills, knowledge and ability to perform duties and responsibilities of the position. Master's in Business or Public Administration preferred.

County Administrator works under the direction of the three member Skagit County Board of Commissioners and is responsible for: implementing Board policies, carrying out Board directives, overseeing achievement of Board goals and objectives, regularly reporting to the Board and keeping the Board timely advised regarding all strategic, legal, policy, labor relations, public safety, agency relations, community relations, operational and financial matters which could materially affect the County, and other matters as directed by the Board.

Individuals interested in being considered for this position should submit a letter of interest, resume and completed application to the Skagit County Personnel Department at 700 South Second Street, Room 101, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. The application form may be obtained from our website www.skagitcounty.net <<http://www.skagitcounty.net>> or by calling our Job Line 1-800-548-7957. Application deadline is Friday, May 3, 2002, by 4:30 p.m.

PUBLIC WORKS ASST. DIRECTOR/UTILITIES MGR-Island County Coupeville, WA) has a full time position. Employee in this position is responsible for managing the Public Works functions of building and facility construction, solid waste and septage management, non-road property acquisitions, and Surface Water Management. Experi-

ence with infrastructures such as roads, sewers and civil engineering and exposure to areas such as parks, fleet mgmt.. Bachelor's degree and 8-10 year responsible management experience providing expertise in the direction of Public Works programs. and services. A Master's Degree in Public Administration, Civil Engineering or a related field is highly desirable. Closes 4/12/02. Island County Application required. Application and info. can be obtained at www.islandcounty.net/hr. or call (360)679-7372, from So. Whidbey, (360)-321-5111 ext. 7254 from Camano (360) 629-4522 ext 7254. EOE

ASSISTANT OR ASSOCIATE PLANNER-ISLAND COUNTY (COUPEVILLE, WA) PLANNING & COMM. DEVEL. seeks a F/T highly motivated land use planner with superior customer service skills to aid the public on planning and development issues and applications. Main duty will involve review of applications for developing Proposals, in accord with Zoning, Critical Areas, SEPA, and all other assoc. land use & Env. Laws. Requires BA in Planning or related field, basic knowledge of planning, zoning, subdivision, land use law, WA GMA, SEPA, one (1) year of related work exp. (Associate Planner requires two (2) years of related work exp.), and strong analytical, comm., & Customer Service skills. Closes 4/19/02 Island County Application required. Application and information can be obtained at www.islandcounty.net/hr. or call (360)679-7372, from So. Whidbey, (360)-321-5111 ext. 7254 from Camano (360) 629-4522 ext 7254. EOE

WHATCOM COUNTY FINANCE DEPARTMENT, in Bellingham, WA, is seeking a Budget Analyst or Sr. Budget Analyst, DOQ. This position assists in planning, issues instructions, and coordinates the preparation and compilation of the county budget and related material. Requires knowledge of Governmental accounting (including BARS), management theory, internal controls, administrative systems, qualitative and quantitative research and analysis, and fiscal management. Senior Budget Analyst level leads and balances

(Continued on page 14)

Employment Opportunities

(Continued from page 13)

team and individual responsibilities and functions more independently. Hiring range for the Budget Analyst is \$3,342-\$3,611/mo., DOQ (Top salary \$4,199/mo.) and for the Sr. Budget Analyst is \$3,635-\$3,928/mo., DOQ (Top salary \$4,566/mo.). This position requires a Bachelor's degree in public or business administration, accounting, finance or closely related field. In addition, the Budget Analyst requires four years of progressively responsible experience in accounting, including two years preparing detailed, organization-wide budgets, and a current CPA is preferred. The Sr. Budget Analyst requires six years of progressively responsible experience in accounting including three years preparing detailed, organization-wide budgets and must be a current CPA. Whatcom County offers excellent employer-paid medical, dental & vision benefits for employee and family, three weeks vacation, generous sick & holiday leave. WA State Retirement system. Optional deferred comp, Flex 125 plan, and long term disability available. Application period closes 4/15/02. For required application packet contact Whatcom County Human Resources, 311 Grand Ave., Suite 107, Bellingham, WA, or call (360) 676-6802. For detailed job announcement visit our website at www.co.whatcom.wa.us or call the jobline at (360) 738-4550. Equal Opportunity Employer.

YAKIMA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT – Planner (Three Positions), Annual Salary Range: \$36,404 to \$52,185. Yakima County is seeking three Planners to join an organization known throughout the State of Washington for its leadership and innovation in urban, rural and environmental planning issues. Hiring Range is up to \$37,530 DOQ. (Greater hiring salary requires a pay policy exception). Planners will be assigned staff reports, technical and field work related to subdivision, zoning, critical areas and environmental project reviews, public assistance and comprehensive planning research. The Planner position requires a Bachelor's Degree in Planning and one year of planning experience, including internships. Masters degree may substitute for experience. Specific assignments will depend on the skill set and experience of the candidates. Check out the County's website at www.co.yakima.wa.us or www.visityakima.com for more infor-

mation. Filing Deadline: Friday, May 3, 2002, Yakima County Human Resources, 128 N. 2nd Street, Courthouse Room 412, Yakima, WA 98909, telephone 509 574-2220. Email: human.resources@co.yakima.wa.us.

TEAM LEADER/SUPERVISOR, The Rogers Counseling Center Substance Abuse Program. MA to work with individual, family, teens, after-hours groups and ADASTA evaluations. Will supervise two other chemical dependency counselors. Share on-call duties. Salary: \$37,000 plus DOE. Great benefits. Apply to: The Rogers Counseling Center, 900 7th Street, Clarkston, WA 99403. Open until filled. Equal Opportunity Employer

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY COUNSELOR - Masters preferred, but not required. Must possess Washington CDP credential or be able to obtain one. Will work in an IOP evening program case management, evaluations, individual, group and family therapy. Will work with adults and possibly adolescents. Occasional on-call duties. Salary \$30,000 + DOE. Great benefits in a beautiful valley with an abundance of recreation. Apply: The Rogers Counseling Center, 900 7th St., Clarkston, WA 99403. Fax résumés to (509) 758-8009, attention Anna. Open until filled. Equal Opportunity Employer.

SECRETARY OR LEGAL ASSISTANT - Columbia County Prosecutor's Office is seeking a self-starting individual with multi-tasking, secretarial and computer skills. Legal experience preferred but not required. Sole support staff for two-attorney office with diverse duties including criminal and civil. Salary DOE, range from \$1,420 to \$2,047 for secretary, or for Legal Assistant entry-level salary \$2,039/month. Send **résumé** to Conrad Hoskins, Columbia County Prosecuting Attorney, PO Box 270, 116 N. 3rd Street, Dayton, WA 99328. Phone: (509) 382-1197.

SAN JUAN COUNTY PERMIT CENTER seeks a Deputy Director to act as Deputy Building Official and manage building section. Serves as Acting Director when Director is not available. Develops and manages an efficient building permit review process. Supervises employees engaged in the review of building plans

and construction for compliance with the Uniform Codes & local building regulations. Also directs work of planners and permit coordinators when Director is not available. Minimum qualifications include two years of college with five years of experience in the field of building inspection and five years experience supervising employees engaged in building inspection. ICBO certification as a building official, or an equivalent combination. Thorough knowledge of the Uniform Codes, including building, plumbing, mechanical, energy and fire codes. Excellent communication skills and the ability to establish effective working relationships. Must be able to read and understand ordinances, blueprints and construction plans. Salary: \$4,161.69/month plus benefits. Submit application to: Administrative Services, 350 Court St. #5, Friday Harbor, WA 98250. Phone: (360) 378-3870. www.co.san-juan.wa.us.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES MANAGER - Clark County, WA. Clark County, one of the fastest growing and highly respected counties in WA is seeking a Department Finance Manager. This is an innovative opportunity for the right person to manage, plan and coordinate the financial, staffing and operational activities for the Finance & Grants Management Unit including payroll, accounting, information systems, grants, contracts and budget management functions. Develops significant linkages with program managers; negotiates contracts and conducts operational and financial audits; oversees contract management and monitoring of sub recipients. Processes financial transactions; provides financial reports; integrates financial information in development of the department budget; prepares financial plans, forecasts and staff reports. Bachelor's degree in accounting, business administration (Certified Public Accountant *strongly preferred*) **and** three years experience in public sector accounting and finance experience, with two years supervisory experience. This is a very dynamic environment; detailed position information and applications available at www.clark.wa.gov and from Clark County HR, 1013 Franklin Street, Vancouver, WA. (360) 397-6018; TDD (360)397-6032. Equal Opportunity Employer

(Continued on page 15)

Employment Opportunities

(Continued from page 14)

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PUBLIC WORKS/UTILITIES, KITSAP COUNTY.

This position plans, organizes, and manages the activities of the Utilities Division of the Public Works Department including the administration and management of the functions of the Wastewater Utility, Solid Waste Utility and Surface/Stormwater Utility. Requires a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, public administration, or closely related field, master's degree preferred, and five years of progressively responsible professional/administrative experience in planning, design, operation/maintenance, and construction of public works facilities, including two years of supervisory or management responsibilities; or any equivalent combination of experience and education which provides the applicant with the desired skills, knowledge and ability required to perform the work. Registration as a Professional Civil Engineer in the state of Washington is desirable. This is an "at will" position that serves "at the pleasure" of the Public Works Director. Salary: \$66,289 to \$84,593/annually. Closes: 5/03/02. Postmarks will not be accepted. Kitsap County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. For an application packet download from our website at www.kitsapgov.com or contact Kitsap County

Personnel, 614 Division Street, MS-23, Port Orchard, WA 98366-4676. (360) 337-7185 extension "0" – 24 hour job line at extension "1".

KITSAP COUNTY, SENIOR DEPUTY CORONER.

Performs technical work to investigate all deaths within the County, determine cause of death and locate and notify next-of-kin. Requires two years of college courses in anatomy and physiology, bachelors degree desirable; and two years experience in quasi law enforcement, emergency services, medicine, health services, or related field involving investigative work; or any equivalent combination of experience and education that provides the applicant with the desired skills, knowledge and ability required to perform the work. Previous supervisory experience is preferred. This is an at-will position that serves at the pleasure of the Kitsap County Coroner. Salary: \$21.55 to \$27.51/hr. Closes: 3/29/02. Call (360) 337-7185 for an application packet or download from our website: www.kitsapgov.com.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WENATCHEE VALLEY TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL has an opening for an Executive Director. Salary range is \$55,000 - \$72,000 per year depending on qualifications, attractive benefits package.

Requirements include but are not limited to a completed application and résumé and a valid state issued drivers license. This position also requires a minimum of five years of planning experience beyond the trainee level and a degree in physical and/or regional planning, civil engineering, geography, or a closely related field. Applications and job descriptions available at Douglas County Transportation & Land Services, 470 Ninth N. E. East Wenatchee, WA 98802, (509) 884-7173, Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. or on our internet site: www.douglascountywa.net. This position is open until April 23 at 5:00 p.m. WVTC does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, treatment or employment in its programs or activities. ADA accommodations available upon request. Equal Opportunity Employer

Health Care Hard to Find for Some

Monday, April 1, 2002

By CAROL SMITH
SEATTLE POST-
INTELLIGENCER

Low-income and elderly patients, unable to find local doctors willing to treat them, are increasingly turning to already crowded emergency rooms in Seattle and across the state.

Large medical practices in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties have closed their doors to new Medicare and Medicaid patients and more are considering it, according to the Washington State Medical Association.

Declining reimbursement rates mean more doctors are losing money on Medicare patients, making the already money-losing Medicaid patients even harder to absorb and driving more of the poor and elderly to the ER.

"There are more people turning 65 years old every minute. And if you've got fewer doctors willing to serve those folks, it will be terrible," said Jean Mathiesen, who handles senior rights issues for the non-profit Senior Services of Seattle/King County.

"Emergency department volumes have skyrocketed," said Tom Curry, president of the state medical association.

Aging baby boomers and a surge of unemployed workers who've lost their health insurance are also helping to drive up ER visits. But doctors said at least some of the growth is from patients who just can't find doctors.

"Doctors are caught in this vise between their professional ethics and business ethics," Curry said. "They want to treat patients, but they can't afford to."

Although no one can say yet how much of the increased pressure on ERs is coming from patients without doctors, it's clear that the number of low-income and elderly people falling in that category is on the rise.

A federal 5.4 percent across-the-board cut in Medicare payments took effect in

January and forced many doctors to reconsider their Medicare and Medicaid practice loads, said Don Fisher, president of the American Medical Group Association, which represents 70,000 physicians in 380 medical groups around the country.

"We are already seeing groups going out of business and physicians leaving practices," he said. "Patients are left scrambling. It's not good for patient care to have them shuttled from place to place." Anecdotal evidence suggests ER doctors are treating many more patients who don't have their own physicians, said Dr. Kathleen Jobe of the University of Washington Medical Center.

"We already have a problem with ERs having to go on divert for ambulances (send incoming patients to other hospitals)," said Jobe, state chapter president of the American College of Emergency Physicians. "Any increase in the number of patients just makes things worse."

Earlier this month, Valley Medical Center in Renton set a record by seeing 269 ER patients in one day. That's more than double the usual load.

"We're seeing a very large increase in the number of people coming into the ER," said Phil Haas, director of admissions. Since the Medicare cuts took effect, the ER has seen visits jump 16 percent to 18 percent.

Statewide, emergency room use is up 28 percent on a per capita basis over the past two years. Some of that comes from patients who have nowhere else to turn, Haas said. "The safety net is getting to have wider gaps." Providence Medical Center-Everett also has an overflowing ER -- in part because at least two large medical practice groups in Snohomish County have closed or restricted the number of new Medicare and Medicaid patients they will see.

Seattle's Harborview Medical Center, which already sees a large percentage of Medicaid patients, hasn't seen a significant increase in emergency admissions, said spokeswoman Susan Gregg Hanson.

A recent survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians found that at least three-quarters of large hospitals around the state now face overcrowding two to three times a week for seven hours at a time. And 82 percent of doctors directing those large emergency rooms said they expect the problem to get worse.

Children are coming in sicker and having to wait longer than they did five years ago, when many more had access to primary-care doctors in the community, said Dr. Rich Molteni, medical director at Children's Hospital.

At Children's, the number of children on Medicaid using the emergency room as a doctor's office has increased about 35 percent in the last two years, Molteni said.

Today, the hospital admits about 15 percent of the kids that come to the ER sick -- about double the percentage of admissions compared with five years ago. Children are sometimes kept up to eight hours in waiting rooms before they're seen or allowed to go home, he said.

Even more troubling are the patients who leave without being seen because the waits are so long.

"Those are the ones we worry about," Molteni said.

Practices that have closed their doors to the poor and elderly insist they did so in order to survive financially. Family Care Network in Bellingham, which has 11 locations and provides about half the primary care for its area, is one of them. "In every case, when we got above a certain percentage (about 25 percent) of Medicare and Medicaid patients, it was impossible to operate the office in a way that it would pay for itself," said Dr. David Lynch, who directs clinic operations for the 45-doctor group. "And that's before we paid our doctors anything. We realized we would go out of business if we didn't do something." In 2000, Family Care Network lost an average of \$4 every time one of its physi-

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

cians saw a Medicare patient. And that was before this year's further cuts. Edmonds Family Medicine loses roughly \$10 per visit for each Medicare patient, according to administrator Marcy Shimada. The clinic no longer sees Medicare patients from the outside, although it will continue to see patients who have been at the practice for some time and are just turning Medicare-eligible age, she said.

In King County, 85 out of 96 doctors practicing through Puget Sound Family Physicians have closed their practices to new Medicare patients, said Dr. Paul Buehrens, a family doctor with the Lakeshore Clinic in Kirkland, which is part of the Puget Sound network.

And he hears the same thing from his peers around the state, although some won't say publicly that they are closed. "The number of doctors who won't take Medicare is far bigger than they're admitting," he said.

In Snohomish County, only about 20 percent of the doctors at the Everett Clinic, the largest provider in the county, will see any new patients at all, including those on Medicare and Medicaid, said Rick Cooper, chief executive of the 200-doctor clinic. New Medicare patients can still be seen through the walk-in clinic system, but then the problem is finding follow-up care, he said.

"We've not yet closed completely to new Medicare," he said. "But the access is extremely restricted. It's a very real problem."

In the past, physicians were able to make up for money they lost seeing poor patients or those without insurance by shifting costs to other patients with private coverage, Lynch said. "But everybody wants to lower their costs," he said. "We've lost the ability to cost-shift."

Washington already has relatively low reimbursement rates compared with some other states. On average, Medicare spends about \$10,000 per year for each Medicare patient in Florida, compared

with about \$3,800 a year here.

The trend is already making it hard to recruit doctors, and many fear a "white coat flight" could further compromise access to care in Washington.

"Our group lost five doctors last year, and it's people in their prime who are leaving," said Lynch. "It's been very difficult to recruit."

Solving the crisis won't be easy. Doctors and state officials say it will require some combination of raising reimbursement rates and reducing the number of patients on government programs. Although Congress will have to take action, the state is also looking into ways to better manage the chronically ill so they don't wind up in emergency rooms.

In an effort to try to keep more doctors from leaving, the Washington Legislature kept a 5 percent increase in Medicaid reimbursement in the budget, although it is only half the amount recommended by Gov. Gary Locke. Medicare reimbursement rates are set by the federal government.

"This is being treated as a much more serious issue than a year ago," said Jim Stevenson, spokesman for the state Department of Social and Health Services. Practices have always tended to limit their Medicaid patients, because Medicaid only partially reimburses doctors for the cost of seeing a patient.

Inmate Claims Neglect At Jail

Thursday, April 4, 2002

**By WARREN CORNWALL
HERALD WRITER**

A pregnant Snohomish County inmate couldn't get the care she needed in the jail, leaving her seriously dehydrated and losing weight, a jail doctor says.

Dr. Ann Kammeyer, a Marysville physician who contracted with the county to care for inmates, wrote a letter urging a judge to release the woman from jail because Kammeyer couldn't get needed dietary care for her.

"Under such conditions, I cannot take

responsibility for her well-being or for that of her baby," Kammeyer wrote.

The doctor's plea prompted Superior Court Judge Richard Thorpe to let the 26-year-old woman out of jail March 25, and to write a scathing letter to jail director Andrea Bynum and top county elected officials.

"I was shocked and outraged," Thorpe wrote in the March 27 letter. "If the situation described is true, and I have no reason to suspect that it is not, I trust you will endeavor to prevent this sort of thing from ever happening again." Thorpe also warned the treatment represented an "invitation to litigation."

A senior jail administrator chalked up the problem largely to miscommunication that has been addressed and said the matter has been overblown.

"I think we've looked into the issues and dealt with the issues," said Randy Finssen, who oversees the jail's food services.

The former inmate, however, remained upset by what she considered mistreatment at the jail.

"I don't think it's very right," said the woman, who asked that her name not be used because she didn't want her pregnancy made public.

She spent 11 days in jail in late March for failing to pay fines on a 1997 car theft conviction and for driving with a suspended license, according to court records.

The woman was 15 weeks pregnant at the time and suffered from vomiting associated with the pregnancy, she said. In the jail, the woman said she often didn't get the extra food portions that pregnant inmates are supposed to get, even after calling the problem to the attention of jail officers.

"I'd ask them if I was going to get my pregnancy tray, and that's when the guards would say, 'Well, what do you need a special tray for? There's nothing that says you're supposed to get one.'"

(Continued on page 18)

News Clippings

(Continued from page 17)

During her jail stay she lost 7 or 8 pounds, she said.

Those problems are echoed in Kammeyer's letter.

The doctor wrote that the pregnant inmate had lost "an unacceptable amount of weight" and wasn't getting the food she needed.

"The head of food services has not only refused to provide the standard pregnancy-enhanced diet, but also treated the nursing staff to a tirade after I requested Gatorade and a cracker for her," Kammeyer wrote.

Kammeyer couldn't be reached for comment Wednesday.

The inmate went for several days without the special diet for pregnant women, and a request for the Gatorade wasn't met, Finsen said.

But it wasn't because officials refused to do anything, he said. The food service provider was mistakenly not alerted that the woman was pregnant until five days after she was booked into the jail, he said.

Then, when the doctor faxed an order for the Gatorade, it wasn't provided because it isn't normally supplied by the food service company that has the contract for the jail, Finsen said. In the future, the company will meet those requests, he said.

The food service company, Canteen Services Corp., did not return a call for comment.

Finsen also said there was no evidence of a tirade by the food services director, Bruce Munn.

"There's a lot more to it than just the letter that was sent, and she did not have all the facts," he said of Kammeyer. Munn could not be reached for comment.

Kammeyer's last day of work at the jail was March 27, the day Thorpe wrote his letter about the incident. But Finsen said her departure was related to contract negotiations, not the letter.

The former inmate said Kammeyer eventually bought her a can of powdered Gatorade with the doctor's own money. That Gatorade, however, was taken by jail officers who said she needed to ask them each time

she wanted some. The woman said when she later asked, she wasn't given any of the drink.

In addition to the food problems, the former inmate said she was forced to sleep on a thin mat on the floor for a week, and that jail officers refused her request for a second pad to make her sleeping more comfortable. Finsen said he had no information about her claims.

Because of overcrowding, the jail has resorted to having inmates sleep on the mats. Finsen said jail policy is to accommodate people when there is a medical need for something, such as an additional mat.

"We really take it seriously, making sure we're taking care of the inmate population," he said.

You can call Herald Writer Warren Cornwall at 425-339-3463 or send e-mail to cornwall@heraldnet.com.