

the Courthouse Journal

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Washington Association of County Officials

Washington State Association of Counties

September 23, 2004
Issue No. 24

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**PLEASE NOTE –
The next Issue of
the CHJ will be
published
October 14, 2004**

Gubernatorial Candidates Gregoire and Rossi to Speak at 3rd Annual WACO/WSAC Fall Conference

The 3rd Annual WACO/WSAC Joint Conference takes place at the Red Lion Hotel in the Park, Spokane, October 4 - 8. WSAC President David Carey and WACO President Mary Dodge have assembled a thought-provoking and entertaining agenda you don't want to miss. Both WACO and WSAC will adopt their 2004 Legislative Agendas at this important conference.

Gubernatorial candidate Christine Gregoire (D) will speak to the Joint Meeting on Wednesday morning immediately following the opening ceremonies. On Thursday morning, at 11:30, gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi (R) will make his presentation during the WACO/WSAC Joint Meeting. Regionally-known economist William Conerly will deliver the opening keynote address on Wednesday morning sharing his "Economic Outlook for Washington 2005." Father Robert Joseph Spitzer, President of Gonzaga University will provide a thought-provoking luncheon address.

A record number of exhibitors will be displaying goods and services useful to county government at the Exhibitor Fair on Wednesday and Thursday. Prizes will be awarded to conference attendees who visit all the booths.

Most of the agenda for WACO and WSAC members on Wednesday and Thursday will focus on development and adoption of the 2005 Legislative Package

for each organization and the discussion and adoption of a joint county-city legislative effort – the Tri-Association Agenda – for the third year running. Topics covered in-depth include the impact of the mentally ill in county jails, health care costs, and transportation improvements. King County Prosecutor and former WACO president Norm Maleng, and State Agriculture Director and former WACO president Valoria Loveland will speak to the core mission of WACO, both historically and with a look into the future.

Wednesday evening WACO and WSAC will hold separate events to honor their presidents and retiring members. Thursday sees election and installation of new officers for WACO and WSAC and business meetings for both organizations. Thursday evening both organizations come together for a joint banquet with entertainment.

Friday morning the conference concludes with a visit from NACo First Vice President Bill Hansell from Umatilla County, Oregon, and adoption of the Tri-Association Proposal. A Certified Public Official (CPO) Training on media relations immediately follows from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Conference registrations and draft agendas have been mailed to all county officials and are posted on the Washington Counties website: www.wacounties.org Register NOW!

Two WACO Officials Run For Congress; Two for County Commissioner

Great news for all four WACO county officials who are running for other offices! King County Sheriff

The Courthouse Journal

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

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CPO PROGRAM

Julie Conlan,
Certified Public Official Coordinator

Dave Reichert received the Republican nomination for the 8th District Congressional race and will be on the general election ballot opposite Dave Ross (D). This is the seat being vacated by Jennifer Dunn (R). And it appears that Island County Auditor Suzanne Sinclair (R) has pulled out a squeaker over two other Republicans for the 2nd District Congressional spot opposite incumbent Rick Larsen (D).

Spokane County Treasurer Linda Wolverton is the Democratic nominee for the District #1 county commissioner spot being vacated by John Roskelley. She will face Todd Mielke (R) in the general election. Kittitas County Auditor David Bowen (D) will face Howard Collins (R), who defeated incumbent Commissioner Max Golladay.

Friday, September 24 is the day the primary will be certified. Something could change, but this is how these races are shaping up.

WSAC Eastern and Western Districts to Meet at Conference and Elect New Officers

WSAC's Eastern and Western Districts will convene on the morning of October 6, 2004, immediately before the start of the WACO/WSAC Joint Conference. Though an abbreviated meeting, new officers for each district will be selected. Traditionally, officers move up the ladder over a three-year period. The current Eastern District Vice-President is Whitman County Commissioner Greg Partch and the current Secretary-Treasurer is Stevens County Commissioner

Merrill Ott. The current Western District Vice-President is Jefferson County Commissioner Dan Titterness and the current Secretary-Treasurer is Cowlitz County Commissioner Bill Lehning, who will not be returning as a commissioner in 2005.

An at-large representative and two alternates to the Board of Directors also need to be selected. The current Eastern District At-Large Representative is Benton County Commissioner Leo Bowman. The Eastern District alternates are Okanogan County Commissioner Mary Lou Peterson and Asotin County Commissioner Don Scheibe. The current Western District At-Large Representative is Island County Commissioner Mike Shelton. The Western District alternates are Lewis County Commissioner Eric Johnson and Skagit County Commissioner Don Munks.

County Commissioners or County Councilmembers interested in any of these positions should contact WSAC staff member Paul Parker, who will forward the information to the respective chairs of the Eastern District or Western District nominating committees.

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

Courts, Public Safety, Law & Justice

Suspicious Package Causes Courthouse Evacuation

From Kitsap County Sheriff's Office

A suspicious, box-like package that arrived at the Kitsap County Courthouse Friday afternoon raised concerns for the safety of courthouse employees and the visiting public.

The parcel, delivered to the courthouse through the U. S. Postal Service, was addressed to Kitsap County Prosecutor Russ Hauge. The arrival of the item was not expected. A name and return address on the package indicated that it had been sent by a prison inmate at Clallam Bay Corrections Center.

The box was moved outside the building to a more remote position at the southwest corner of the parking area behind the courthouse.

Officers from Port Orchard Police Department responded to the courthouse to establish a control perimeter and to coordinate further emergency response. In a preventive measure to ensure the safety of everyone inside the courthouse complex, Port Orchard Police

subsequently issued an order to evacuate the building shortly after 3:00 p.m.

Fire and rescue units from Fire District 7 (South Kitsap) staged at an adjacent county facility. County officials, including Commissioners Chris Endresen, Jan Angel and Patty Lent, together with county departmental administrators and elected office holders, established a temporary command center in a county office building nearby.

Local law enforcement explosives technicians were not immediately available; a request for assistance was made to military authorities. Technicians from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Mobile Unit 11 detachment at Naval Base Kitsap – Bangor, responded to the courthouse to attempt to determine the package's contents and, if necessary, render it safe or remove it from the premises.

In the interest of public safety and for the accountability of personnel, county commissioners authorized the release of courthouse employees for the remainder of the workday.

Some employees were obliged to wait until the situation was safely resolved before they could return to the courthouse to get their personal possessions, secure their office spaces, and retrieve their vehicles that had been parked inside the safety exclusion zone established by police and EOD.

The Navy EOD technicians were able to determine that the parcel posed no threat -- it contained legal documents regarding a 1996 homicide case.

Robert Garry Carter, now age 52, is serving a sentence of life imprisonment for murder, in connection with the death of 34 year-old William Dean Leiter on April 20, 1996, in Central Kitsap. Carter is presently incarcerated at Clallam Bay. It is unknown why the package of legal documents pertaining to Carter's conviction was mailed to the county prosecutor.

By 5:10 p.m. the courthouse was re-opened to employees.

Elections, Licensing and Recording

State General Records Retention Schedule Updated

The General Records Retention Schedule for Washington State agencies has been updated. GS 05001 covers public disclosure requests for access to state agency records and the agency responses thereto. The State Records Committee has amended the retention period for these records effective September 15, 2004, to increase the retention period from one year to five years. Agencies are strongly encouraged to implement this change immediately and not destroy any records pursuant to the current GS 05001.

Chapter 42.17 RCW requires all state agencies to provide, upon request by any person, the opportunity to inspect or copy a public record, unless the record is subject to an exemption from disclosure. Agencies must respond to a public records request within five days. There is a five-year statute of limitations for any action brought against an agency for denial of access to a record. (RCW 42.17.410). In order to be in a position to defend a lawsuit for denial of access to a record, or failure to provide a record, a state agency must retain the records of its response to the public disclosure request. Otherwise, the agency will not be able to show that it complied with the requirements of the statute. For this reason, the retention period was increased from one year to five years.

The financial risk to an agency that is unable to show it complied with a request for a public record can be great. Pursuant to RCW 42.17.340, if a person prevails in an action against

a state agency for denial of a public record request, the agency will be required to pay all of the person's costs to bring the lawsuit, including reasonable attorney fees. In addition, the court must order the agency to pay the person not less than \$5 and not more than \$100 for each day that the person was denied the right to inspect the record.

Auditors Appear Before Senate Committee to Discuss Elections

The Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee held an interim hearing Tuesday to discuss and take public testimony on the integrity of electronic voting systems and about how the new state primary worked last week. County auditors who testified were Corky Mattingly, Yakima County (Auditors' Association President), Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County, Pat McCarthy, Pierce County (Auditors' Legislative Committee co-chair), and Karen Flynn, Kitsap County. Also present were Kim Wyman, Thurston County (Legislative co-chair) and Mike Garvison, Skamania County Auditor. Mattingly and Terwilliger, from the only two counties thus far with direct recording electronic voting systems (DREs), spoke to the integrity of their primaries and answered questions from committee members as to certification of their systems, both state and federal. Their primaries went very well. Because of the Federal bilingual requirement for Spanish ballots in Yakima County, Mattingly said that there were 53 observers from the U.S. Department of Justice on hand.

Secretary of State staff also

contributed information about the requirements under the Help America Vote Act as far as DREs. By January, 2006, each polling place will be required to have a "Disability Access Voting Device". For example, there will be headphones for those with impaired vision and a straw-like device allowing paraplegic voters to make their selections by "sipping and puffing" on the straw. Secretary of State Sam Reed has also stated that he will require a paper trail for all DREs.

Pat McCarthy, Karen Flynn and Bob Terwilliger addressed the consolidated ballot that they and three other county auditors used for the primary last week, and cited that the education programs that they used in their counties and the education campaign that the Secretary of State put forth made all the difference in the successful primary this year, which required a different way of voting for the first time in 70 years. A Secretary of State's survey showed that 98 percent of those who voted were aware of the new primary. McCarthy brought notebooks with just a fraction of the 25,000 survey results her office received after they included the survey with the consolidated ballot. She noted that even though voters overwhelmingly disliked the pick-a-party primary, when asked if they understood the ballot, almost all said yes.

The good news also was that the numbers of voters voting in the primary were at least as good as in other presidential election years or better. Some had worried that voter turnout would drop significantly. The educational program evidently made the difference.

Get in on the Ground Floor for Brownfields Grants

Last year 14 Washington communities were awarded Brownfields competitive grants by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Now EPA has announced the guidelines for FY2005 Brownfields Assessment, Cleanup, and Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant proposals. Proposals for funding in FY2005 will be due November 12, 2004. EPA estimates that \$100 million will be available nationwide to make over 200 grant awards in FY2005. Brownfields grants are awarded for community revitalization projects involving the assessment, cleanup, and reuse of brownfield properties as well as for job training programs. Job training grant guidelines will be announced separately.

Counties typically receive several of the grants. Last year, Washington county governments received five of the 25 grants awarded in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska. Half the communities receiving these grants consisted of 20,000 people or fewer. Although EPA is reaching rural communities in general, it is making a special outreach to rural

communities in the eastern half of the state.

For a general background on the EPA Brownfields competitive grants please see the attachment. To view the proposal guidelines, please visit www.epa.gov/brownfields. Also please contact the EPA Region 10 Brownfields team at 1-800-424-4EPA or visit their website at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/brownfields/brownfields> to get information about upcoming grant training opportunities and other technical assistance available in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Riparian Buffers on Agricultural Lands

The State Senate Agriculture Committee held a work session on agricultural buffers on agricultural lands. This was an opportunity for several committees to learn about the various issues affecting buffers. They heard from the agricultural, environmental, development and science communities, counties and cities. Kendra Smith, Skagit County Natural Resource Policy Coordinator, provided an excellent overview on how difficult it has been for Skagit County to adopt and

implement a critical areas ordinance. It has taken over five years and significant amount of staff and money and they still don't have an approved ordinance.

By the time committee members heard from all the different perspectives, they began to see the difficulties counties have making a legislative decision that doesn't get appealed.

Counties asked for the following help:

1. Natural resource agencies to help instead of fighting;
2. Requiring the resource agencies to perform the same kind of balancing on their guidance and policy documents that counties must do when they take action;
3. Continue to evaluate the appeal process;
4. Help clarify the best available science requirement; and
5. Don't require counties to regulate agricultural practices through land use.

General Government Issues

PERS & LEOFF Rate Increases for Employers and Employees

Proposed increases to both the PERS and LEOFF retirement systems will be reviewed and possibly adopted by the Pension Council on September 30, 2004. The proposed rates are listed below and would become effective May 2007. The rates are still subject to modification by the Legislature.

Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)

	<i>Plan 1</i>		<i>Plan 2</i>		<i>Plan 3</i>	
	Current	Proposed 5/2007	Current	Proposed 5/2007	Current	Proposed 5/2007
Member Contribution Rate	6%	6%	1.18%	3.38%	Variable	Variable
Employer Contribution Rate	1.18%	5.73%	1.18%	5.73%	1.18%	5.73%

Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF)

	<i>Plan 1</i>		<i>Plan 2</i>	
	Current	Proposed 5/2007	Current	Proposed 5/2007
Member Contribution Rate	0%	0%	5.09%	7.20%
Employer Contribution Rate	0%	0%	3.25%	4.32%
State Contribution Rate	0%	0%	2.03%	2.88%

Public Health and Human Services

State Board of Health to hear Presentations About On-Site-Sewage Operations and Maintenance

The State Board of Health will hear presentations regarding on-site-sewage operations and maintenance at their October 6, 2004 Board Meeting. The three areas on which they will be receiving presentations and information are:

1) Results of a survey of marine counties regarding what they are

currently doing – what works and what doesn't

2) A legal clarification prepared by the Attorney General's Office on access to private property

3) Consideration of a resolution about what the governor's office, other agencies, and the Legislature might do to more thoroughly address this issue.

These presentations and discussions will inform the State

Board of Health as they move through the On-Site-Sewage rule revision process.

The Department of Health is suggesting, among other proposals, that the state board simplify the operations and maintenance planning for smaller, non-marine counties.

Transportation and Public Works

Senate Highways Committee Holds Work Session

Early this summer staff from WSAC, AWC, the State Legislature and WSDOT met to discuss a WSDOT concern about how city and county zoning decisions are affecting right-of-way costs under fixed cost project budgets. WSAC and AWC staff worked with WSDOT to identify the factors that affect WSDOT's ability to deliver projects on time and within budget. They are:

- 1) Real estate prices are increasing faster than other construction factors.
- 2) Improved highways and interchanges are logical places for commercial development.
- 3) There is long lag time between project design/funding, and local governments cannot suspend land use decisions while funding is secured.
- 4) Local governments have a duty to make fair decisions on rezoning requests and to respect property rights.

These findings were presented to the Senate Highways Committee. Some legislators expressed concerns about the increasing costs, asking how local governments can protect the state's interest in right-of-ways. Local governments encouraged WSDOT to work more closely with them when comprehensive plans and transportation improvement plans are being updated.

House Transportation Committee Invites Cities and Counties

Counties and cities were invited to

make a presentation about our current funding systems and transportation needs. Olympia Mayor, Mark Foutch, presented the cities perspective and highlighted some of the choices his city is making. Brian Zielger, Pierce County public works director, gave an excellent presentation about Pierce County transportation system and funding choices. WSAC staff provided an overview of county funding and the transportation system. The panel focused on what the needs were for local governments and did not talk about an amount or how revenue would be split. The Tri-Association is hoping to make new transportation revenue a key request and is working to reach an agreement as to how much and what the split should be.

Governor's Office Hosts Gang of Ten

The governor's office recently called the first meeting of the Gang of Ten, the group that recommends how to allocate statewide flexible funds from the federal government. This meeting provided an opportunity for everyone to have a baseline understanding about the reauthorization status of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (T-3). The reauthorization status is up in the air and it is unlikely Congress will act before it recesses. Continuing resolutions have provided one year of funding.

About half of the first year money has been allocated to WSDOT and the population distribution to the MPO's, RTPO's and the county lead agencies. The allocation to the Rural Economic Vitality (REV) and statewide competitive programs has

been made. The committee agreed not to allocate these funds at this time, recognizing the reauthorization uncertainty and an opportunity to discuss new funding ideas. There is an interest by the ports and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board staff to redirect the REV money into local freight projects. The committee agreed to meet again in mid-October to see if we can reach an agreement on future allocations. We will be asking for your input and direction prior to the meeting.

Regulating Motorized Foot Scooters

During the 2003 Legislative session, Senator Horn sponsored [ESB 5450](#), which allowed broad local authority on how to regulate motorized foot scooters. Because motorized scooters, and other types of scooters (such as pocket rockets) have become a very hot topic over the past few months, the Senate Highway Transportation Committee wanted an update on how local jurisdictions were implementing [ESB 5450](#). Kirkland's Deputy Mayor Joan McBride, their Transportation Commissioner Norm Storme, and Doug Levy, representing Kent, Federal Way, and Everett, provided several examples on how cities are implementing local ordinances on motorized scooters. The general tone of the committee was that the authority to continue to regulate motorized scooters should reside with local jurisdictions. The committee asked if counties have passed any ordinances to regulate motorized foot scooters. If you have passed an ordinance, please give Scott Merriman a call at (360) 753-1886.

Transportation and Public Works (continued)

Public Works Bills of Interest

On September 20, Representative Kathy Haigh and Representative Mike Armstrong convened a working group to discuss **HB 2521** (requiring prime contractors to bond the subcontractor's portion of retainage), and **HB 2522** (prohibiting rejection of all bids except for good cause). Specific to **HB 2522**, we have opposed this legislation because we

believe it is important to reserve the right to reject all bids. The new inclusion of "good cause" language and how a county/city describes "good cause" when rejecting all bids could be considered subjective by the bidder and could result in legal challenges. At this point, reintroducing this legislation seems likely. We are requesting public works directors and procurement staff to contact Scott Merriman at (360) 753-1886 and provide examples

of bids that have been rejected, and how this proposed legislation would impact your bidding process.

Association News

County Treasurers Meet for Legislative Conference

The Washington State Association of County Treasurers met for its annual legislative conference at Snoqualmie Pass on September 13-14. Twenty-four county treasurers, several deputies and others attended. Treasurers' President Judi Morris, Jefferson County and Legislative Chair Rose Bowman, Lewis County, led the meeting. On Monday, Neal Cook, Department of Revenue, presented information relating to the history of mobile homes and manufactured homes and how they are valued and assessed. Much discussion and many questions centered around assessing and collecting on mobile homes on leased lots and private lots, as well as points relating to certifying mobile homes to real property, distraint sales and liens. President Judi Morris is putting together a meeting with the county assessors to discuss mobile home issues and any and all potential administrative and legislative solutions.

The group moved onto legislative issues Monday afternoon and Tuesday, covering nearly 20 legislative proposals that had been submitted to Legislative Chair Rose Bowman prior to the meeting, as well as several others. Some of the issues were carried over from the last legislative session and all were discussed thoroughly among the group. The treasurers recommendations to the 2005 WACO Legislative Package will be finalized during the WACO/WSAC Annual Conference, the first week of October.

Assessors Meet in Everett for Annual Conference

The 107th Annual Conference of the Washington State Association of County Assessors (WSACA) was held at the Everett Howard Johnson's, September 13-16. The conference was well attended with 27 counties represented. Cindy Portmann, Snohomish County Assessor, hosted the event and had an interesting week planned for all participants.

Monday afternoon the kick-off event was a VIP tour of the Boeing Assemble Plant at the Paine Field Airport. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the tour of one of the world's largest buildings. For those so inclined, the Assessors also held the First Annual Larry Shelley Memorial Golf Tournament at Legion Memorial Golf Course. In spite of the "blistering rain" on the first nine holes, the scores were good ranging from a seven under par to one over par. The first-place team was from Asix Software with the -7. Second place went to a team anchored by Bruce Walker, Pacific County Assessor and Keith Willnauer, Whatcom County Assessor, with a total score of 5 under. The third-place finishers, with a 3 under par were lead by Steve Marks, Franklin County Assessor. The KP for the women on the 9th green was Gail Rauch, former Snohomish County Assessor and for the men, Scott Noble, King County Assessor. On the 16th green, David Coffman, Snohomish County, was the KP winner. Jerry Crossler, King County Assessor's Office, was the winner of the long drive.

President Dave Cook called the

meeting to order first thing Tuesday morning and Cindy welcomed the Assessors to her beautiful county. Pastor John Mason gave the invocation and the colors were presented by a color guard for Naval Station Everett. Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon and City of Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson welcomed the group and gave an overview of activities in their area. Debbie Wilke, WACO Executive Director, made a presentation on the new horizons for county government. Michelle Hagen, WACO Deputy Director, made a presentation discussing the legislative process. Peri Maxey, Assistant Director for the Property Tax Division of the Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR) talked about current and upcoming issues for their division.

The luncheon keynote speaker, Vanessa Horning, gave an upbeat presentation claiming "Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?" Anne Solwick, the new Executive Director of the State Board of Tax Appeals, discussed the current challenges including a complete review and rewrite of the WAC Rules for her division. Steve Lightle, Residential Appraisal Manager, then gave a field computing demonstration of the system Snohomish County used to move to annual revaluation. Ross Wigney finished the afternoon with a presentation on methamphetamine awareness and associated crimes. Tuesday evening the Assessors were treated to a "field trip" to Safeco Field for a Mariner's Game. Though the weather improved, the roof was closed and the Mariners WON!

Association News (continued)

Wednesday brought a morning of continuing education on mass appraisal techniques presented by Robert Gloudemans of Almy, Gloudemans, Jacob & Denne. After lunch Greg Argel, NW Regional Realty Officer and Judy Joseph, Puget Sound Agency Superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, discussed trust land and trust status. The late afternoon offered break-out sessions for assessors, chief deputies & chief appraisers as well as the annual DOR/industry meeting. Wednesday night's banquet featured jazz pianist Mark Hager and the Scatterbrains improvisational comedy troupe.

Thursday morning, after the WSACA Past Presidents Breakfast, the business meeting included the election of the following officers for 2005: President Diane Dorey, Lewis

County; Vice-President Scott Furman, Okanogan County; Secretary-Treasurer Scott Noble, King County; Eastern District Chair Dave Anderson, Adams County; Central District Chair H.J. "Van" Vandenberg, Klickitat County; Western District Chair Bruce Walker, Pacific County; and Puget Sound District Chair Patricia Costello, Thurston County.

The Assessors' 2005 June meetings will be held in Kittitas County hosted by Iris Rominger and the 108th WSACA Annual Conference will be held in Spokane County hosted by Duane Sommers.

Vyrle Hill Retires From Pacific County

Vyrle Hill began his career with Pacific County as an accountant with the Department of Public Works in

1974. Since that time he has served in many positions including management analyst, clerk of the board, capital construction coordinator, and risk manager. Since July 1987, Vyrle has served as county administrative officer. Pacific County invites other members of the county family to join them for a get together to celebrate Vyrle Hill's contribution to Pacific County and counties across the state on Saturday, October 23, 2004 at 4:00 p.m. at the Willapa Harbor Chamber of Commerce in South Bend. You can make a reservation to attend by calling (360) 875-6649 or (360) 942-5226.

If you would like to send Vyrle a card or note, the mailing address is P.O. Box 213, South Bend, WA 98586.

Good Things

For Your Benefit...

Final Rates Published for 2005

2005 rates have been finalized for Washington Counties Insurance Fund. If you are interested in knowing where our member counties stand in regard to employee benefits costs, please give us a call. WCIF staff would be glad to work with you in analyzing your rates and plans. We would also be pleased to share information about how the WCIF/WCIP pools are working to better serve the counties of Washington State. For further information please contact Krista Whitaker at (360) 586-0401 or kristawcif@thurston.com.

Healthy Tips from Washington Counties Insurance Fund

Yes, You Can Afford to Eat Healthfully...

One argument often given for why people don't eat better is that fruits and vegetables are too expensive. Not true. When researchers at the US Department of Agriculture systematically priced 154 different types of produce, they found that more than half of them cost less than 25 cents per serving. And 127 of them cost less than 50 cents per serving. "That's 127 different ways to eat a serving of produce for less than the price of a 3-ounce candy bar," they write in their report - *How Much Do Americans Pay for Fruits and Vegetables?*

Granted, their values are based on 1999 prices, but between then and now the cost of produce has not gone up that much. The numbers the investigators generated still make pretty reasonable ballpark figures.

How can it be that fruits and vegetables cost so much less per serving than they seem to? After all, sometimes sweet peppers cost up to \$2.99 a pound. The answer, the researchers point out, is that there are usually several servings to a pound. For instance a pound of peaches, at about \$1, affords four servings of the fruit, even if there are fewer than four peaches in the bag (It doesn't take all that much to make a serving). Even blackberries, the most expensive fruit the researchers came across, came out to only 66 cents per serving (The fresh version of many types of produce was often cheaper than frozen or canned, despite common notions to the contrary).

Another way to look at it: Americans spend about 15 cents out of every food dollar on fruits and vegetables. They spend almost 19 cents out of every food dollar on bakery items, soda pop, candy, gum, and mints. Surely there's room in the budget for spinach, apples, baby carrots, watermelon, broccoli, and Romaine lettuce, all of which cost less than 25 cents a serving.

Washington Counties Insurance Fund

(360) 586-0466

www.wacounties.org/wcif

Courthouse Ramblings

Former Whatcom County Auditor Wella Hansen celebrated her 100th birthday on September 20. Wella began her career in the auditor's office in 1938 and then served as auditor from her election in November 1958 until her retirement in February 1978. She was one of the county officials who helped in the effort to pass legislation to let counties keep the interest on county monies that sat idle until warrants arrived. Prior to that, the banks kept

the interest. Wella was WACO President in 1973 and received the WACO Distinguished Service Award in 2002. Stories about her feistiness in office and during retirement are notorious to this day. Wella's stepdaughter Pat Knapp was also a county auditor in Jefferson County from 1983-1986. We wish Wella many more happy years and congratulate her on reaching this milestone.

* * * * *

Garfield County Assessor Irene Geiger retired on August 31 after 18 years in office. We wish her all the best for a relaxing and active retirement. Her chief deputy of many years, Colleen Ledgerwood, has been appointed by county commissioners to serve as assessor for the unexpired term. Congratulations to Colleen!

* * * * *

Calendar of Events

Meeting	Location	Date	Information
Calendar of Events online – www.wacounties.org For your convenience training and workshops are bolded .			
<u>OCTOBER 2004</u>			
WACO/WSAC Joint Fall Conference	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4 – 8	(360) 753-7319
WSAC Eastern District Meeting	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 6	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Western District Meeting	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 6	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Urban County Caucus	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 7	(360) 753-1886
WACO Board of Trustees	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 4	(360) 753-7319
Washington STATE	Election Results - Last day for SOS to certify	October 5	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
WSAC Board of Directors	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 5	(360) 753-1886
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 7	(360) 753-1886
WACO Board of Trustees	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 8	(360) 753-7319
CPO Training - Meet the Media: Relations and Presentations	Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane	October 8	http://www.wacounties.org/CPO/Course%20Calendar.htm
ACE Committee (Payroll & HR)	Radisson Hotel, SeaTac	October 13	(360) 586-0466
EMC Task Force	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	October 14	(360) 753-1886
Mass Fatalities Incident Response Planning**	Vancouver, Washington	October 18-22	(866) 623-6634
<u>NOVEMBER 2004</u>			
Washington STATE	ELECTION DAY	November 2	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
EMC Task Force	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	TBD	(360) 753-1886
VETERANS DAY	WA Counties Bldg CLOSED	November 11	(360) 753-1886
WA Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs Fall Conference	Shilo Inn, Ocean Shores	Nov. 15 – 18	(360) 486-2380
Association of County Human Services	Spokane County	Nov. 17 - 19	(360) 753-1886
WA Counties Insurance Fund - 2005 Budget	Red Lion at Columbia Center, Kennewick	November 18	(360) 586-0466
WSAC Board of Directors	Wyndham Hotel, SeaTac Airport	November 19	(360) 753-1886
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	WA Counties Bldg CLOSED	Nov. 25 and 26	(360) 753-1886

<u>DECEMBER 2004</u>			
Washington STATE	Election results – Last day for SOS to certify.	December 2	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee	Tentative - TBD	December 3	(360) 753-1886
Newly Elected Officials Training	Phoenix Inn, Olympia	December 7 – 9	(360) 753-1886
EMC Task Force	WA Counties Bldg, Olympia	December 9	(360) 753-1886
WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Winter Meeting & Banquet	Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle	December 9-10	(360) 753-2175
Washington STATE	Resolutions – Last day to file for 2/8/05 special election.	December 23	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
Washington STATE	Initiatives – Last day to file signatures for Legislature.	December 2	http://www.vote.wa.gov/calendar/
CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY	WA Counties Bldg CLOSED	December 25	(360) 753-1886
NEW YEARS HOLIDAY	WA Counties Bldg CLOSED	December 31	(360) 753-1886
** A special Tuition-Free Course offered by the National Mass Fatalities Institute in partnership with the Clark County Medical Examiner's Office			

October County Calendar

- 1 Property owners desiring special valuation for improvements to eligible historic property must apply for classification, with the county assessor, by this date. The assessor shall refer each application for classification to the local review board within ten days after they are filed. RCW 84.26.040, .050
 - 4 The county legislative authority shall begin a hearing on the county budget, not to exceed five days in length. Upon conclusion, they shall adopt a budget and fix the amount of the necessary levies. RCW 36.40.070, .080, .090 (For alternate date on budget hearing, see RCW 36.40.071)
 - 15 The county assessor shall report to the Department of Revenue progress in the revaluation of property in the county. RCW 84.41.130
 - 30 Every county official must report to the Public Disclosure Commission, on an L-5 form, their lobbying activities for the previous quarter (July - September). It is recommended that these forms be accumulated in the county commissioners' office and forwarded on behalf of the entire county. RCW 42.17.190 NOTE: "in-person lobbying by any elected official of such agency on behalf of such agency or in connection with the powers, duties, or compensation of such official," need not be reported.
 - 31 Second half taxes are due and payable at the office of the county treasurer. RCW 84.56.020 Because this year's due date falls on a Sunday, the remittance shall be considered timely if it is paid on the next business day, November 1. RCW 1.12.070
- During October The Department of Revenue shall equalize the value of all property in the state and levy the state taxes authorized by law, sometime during the months of September or October. RCW 84.48.080