HOUSE CONTEMPLATING I-695 BACKFILL CUTS
This week WSAC and WACO continued to hear that the House intends to reduce I-695 backfill funding. At least some House budget writers would prefer not to use the LEOFF surplus, as the Senate did. Instead they argue that the budget, including the I-695 backfill and programs vital to counties, should be cut.

On the positive side, in making the cut, at least one House version tries to soften the blow to counties by giving them half the cut given to comparable cities. Unfortunately, the cut treats individual counties differently. It focuses the cuts on counties where the MVET loss equaled two percent or less of the “unrestricted” county revenues. This would include San Juan, Pierce, Clark, King, Kitsap and Snohomish counties. The cut would total $6.2 million, about the same amount these same counties would receive for shoreline rules. The net effect would be to leave the shorelines mandate unfunded.

Only an extraordinary effort by all our members (with special thanks to the sheriffs) held the funding in the Senate. Unfortunately, we are going to have to ask all of you to make a similar effort in the House. We expect a House budget (or budgets) to be finalized in the next week. Some of you have been told by your members that the funding is secure. Unfortunately, the budget writers do not share this view. Please ask your Legislators to talk with their Appropriations Committee colleagues and chairs. Remind them that counties took a 47 percent cut in their MVET criminal justice support last year.

WACO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO RETIRE
Fred Saeger, executive director of the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) for the past 23+ years, has officially announced his retirement, effective August 31, 2001. Because the Department of Retirement Systems has granted Fred four months credit for active duty military service, he will be leaving after 29 years and eight months with the Association.

An Olympia native, Fred graduated from the University of Washington in economics and mathematics in 1969 and received his Masters in Business Administration in 1971. After serving briefly in the military as a finance officer, Fred came to WACO in January 1972, in the newly created position of administrative assistant. At the time, the only two employees at WACO were the “originals” from when the office first opened March 1, 1960: Executive Director Lyle Watson and Executive Treasurer Mabel Jeter.

The Board of Trustees hired Fred as Executive Director after Watson became Mayor of Olympia, in 1978.

Looking back over the years, Fred feels that his greatest success has been “seeing WACO grow from a two person office to a respected professional association with well-qualified employees.” He also considers the joint venture between WACO and WSAC in the construction of the Washington Counties Building, in 1985, to be a major accomplishment. “The Associations have spent years developing a close working relationship and are at a level of mutual respect and deference. We will now be holding joint conferences each October and are putting together a substantial training program for all of our members,” he noted.

As for his years of legislative work, Fred has become somewhat of the property tax guru on the “hill” and is well respected for his knowledge and contribution to the property tax laws of this state.
The single biggest challenge the counties have faced? “Lack of adequate finances,” Fred replies. “Counties must be close to drowning before the legislature will provide some financial help. We just get our heads above water for a while, but then begin to sink with additional workloads and new mandates,” he laments.

Fred is looking forward to retiring, and as with everything else he does, his retirement is organized to a “t.” He plans to spend one day a week to do his favorite things: “hike, fish, and hunt,” and the other four days on projects. “I have a 155-acre tree farm that is being planted and will take a lot of time for the next few years until I can put it to bed for the kids and grandkids.”

He will be spending the weekends with his wife, Sandra, since she has a few more years until retirement from the Thurston County Assessor’s office. Fred and Sandra have two children, Elaine Rinker, employed by Computer Associates, and Charlie, who is in college.

Fred has a keen interest in history and especially the early history of the Pacific Northwest, so he will be spending time reading as well. When asked which famous people he’d like to have dinner with (living or dead), he answered Teddy Roosevelt, Lewis and Clark, and George Washington Bush, one of the earliest black pioneers in Washington State.

We wish Fred the very best as he retires and will miss his easy grin, his lively fishing and hunting stories, and his unfailing guidance.

**Washington Counties Scholarships - There are Only Two Weeks Left to Apply!:** All Washington Counties Scholarship applications must be postmarked no later than April 16 to qualify for any of the seven awards being offered this year. Please call (360) 753-1886 for information. Applications are available at www.wacounties.org/waco.

**About the Awards**
For the 2001/02 school year, the Washington Counties Scholarship Fund is offering seven awards this year to dependent children of county employees. They include:

- **Washington Counties Scholarships:** Five $1,500 one time awards, eligibility includes all full-time students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree, associate degree, or technical/vocational program for the 2001/02 school year.

- **NACo Presidential Scholarships:** These two renewable awards are offered to graduating high school seniors by the National Association of Counties in recognition of the contributions of NACo President Jane Hague, King County Council Member.

- **The David Davenport Scholarship** is for $2,500 annually and is renewable for four years (total of $10,000) if the student maintains a 2.5 GPA. In addition, NACo will reimburse up to $1,500 of the travel expenses of the winner of the Davenport Scholarship and his/her parents to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in July for the 66th NACo Annual Conference where the scholarship will be presented.

- **The CH2M Hill Scholarship** is for $1,000 annually and is renewable for four years (total of $4,000) if the student remains in “good standing.” Expense reimbursements for the trip to NACo for the winning student and his/her parents are $1,000.

**SEEKING WESTERN WASHINGTON COUNTY TO HOST 2004 SUMMER CONVENTION**
Bids for the 2004 Summer Convention will be reviewed by the WSAC Board of Directors at their meeting on Tuesday, June 12, at the 95th Annual Summer Convention in Yakima. Bids must be received in the WSAC office no later than Monday, June 4, to be included in the Board packets.

Association bylaws direct that the Convention alternate between eastern and western locations. 2004 is a Western Washington venue. The bid materials are to include a letter of the commissioners’ intent to host the meeting and information about the properties that meet the Association requirements. In-person presentations are always welcome.

Requirements for the Summer Convention include a MINIMUM of 225 guestrooms and 9 meeting rooms, ranging in capacity from 35 to 300.

If you have questions or require further information, please call Kim Zydek at the WSAC office, (360) 753-1886.
WACCCs SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR WSAC SUMMER CONFERENCE
Calling all Clerks! – It’s conference time again. There are conference scholarships available this year for members of the WACCCs (Washington Association of Commission/Council Clerks) to attend the WSAC Summer Conference in Yakima, June 12-15, 2001. Application deadline is Friday, April 20. These will be scholarships for up to $500 to cover conference registration, travel and lodging expenses. Application forms may be obtained through Vickie Musgrove, Cowlitz County Commissioners Office, 207 4th Avenue North, Kelso, WA 98626, phone (360) 577-3020 or email MusgroveV@co.cowlitz.wa.us.

TRANSPORTATION

SENATE ADOPTS BRCT EFFICIENCY BILLS WHILE REVENUE PACKAGE STILL STRUGGLES
With only fifteen days to go before the end of the legislative session, both the House and Senate are still grappling with how to solve the revenue questions on the transportation package. The twenty-seven bills originally introduced by each House have now been reduced down to about a third. This week the Senate completed their work on the accountability and efficiency bills. For the most part, counties are in agreement with the amended accountability/efficiency bills. However, we are still working to amend two bills: SSB 5765 - streamlining the environmental permits and SSB 5755 - Adjusting responsibilities of the Transportation Commission.

Most of the attention is still centered on the revenue packages. Rumors abound regarding when the Senate statewide revenue package will be released. We understand that the anticipated 10-year, $10 billion proposal is hung up because the regional package has yet to come together. The Senate Transportation Committee will hold a hearing April 9th at 8:00am in SHR 4 on two bills, SSB 6140 sponsored by Senator McDonald and SB 6172 sponsored by Senator Patterson. As many as six regional proposals have been on the table with no clear answers to who pays, who selects the projects, and who governs. We anticipate that this topic may continue into, dare we say -the next session

For questions or comments, please contact Jackie White (WSAC staff).

TRANSPORTATION BILLS OTHER THAN THE BRCT PACKAGE
SB 5733 – An act relating to county road construction projects is now on its way to the Governor’s desk. The House yesterday with a 96-1 vote adopted SB 5733. Current law permits counties to utilize day labor to construct or improve county roads that are limited to no more that the annual county road construction budget or a specific dollar amount. The percentage and the dollar amount vary depending on the total annual county road construction budget. This bill would allow the annual limit to be increased by 10 percent in counties with a population of less that 50,000 people.

SHB 1394 - Clarifying the use of county road funds in salmon recovery projects is now before the Senate. The Senate Transportation Committee amended this bill before passing it out of committee. The amended bill now narrows the county road funds to be expended for just fish passage barriers and limits the amount of county road funds that can be used beyond the right-of-way. As amended, the county road dollars that can be expended for this purpose are limited to one-half of one percent of a county’s annual road construction budget and must not exceed twenty-five percent of the total cost of activities related to fish barrier removal on any one project. In addition, the language clearly states that the local legislative authority makes this determination. The House voted out this bill without amendment 98-0.

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

TAXATION & FINANCE

PROPERTY TAXATION
The list of property tax proposals got significantly shorter with Monday’s cutoff. Several of the House bills that had gone over to the Senate providing for various property tax revisions failed to clear the Senate Ways & Means Committee. Those include SHB 1011, which is a property tax exemption for disabled veterans, EHB 1092, which increases from five to 20 acres allowed for church exemption, HB 1219, exempting community radio stations from property tax, HB 1408, providing additional property tax relief for widows of veterans, HB 1438, allowing seniors who are in adult care facilities to maintain their senior citizen property tax exemptions, HB 1489, setting property assessment standards, and EHB 2005, which subjects certain properties sold by federal agencies, to back taxes. The only one of those measures that was supported by the assessors was HB 1438 (see above). Of the bills remaining alive, most of them have support of the Assessors’ Association.
TAX INCREMENT FINANCING
ESHB 1418 is in the Senate Rules Committee awaiting consideration by the full Senate. The measure was modified in the Senate Ways & Means Committee to raise the threshold vote that is necessary before an increment district could be created. As it passed the House, approval had to be obtained from enough districts, when combined, that levied 60 percent of the tax. In the Senate it was raised to 70 percent. This change was intended to ensure that the county had a voice in the process. However, based upon existing levies and even based upon statutory authorized levies, a 70 percent threshold does not assure all counties would be protected. Amendments are being offered to the bill to raise that threshold to 80 percent and to also include language that would allow the county to “opt out.” Others will continue to oppose the bill even if these amendments are included.

TIMBER TAX
SSB 5702 passed the House on Wednesday by a vote of 95-0. There was one minor amendment added on the floor of the House to take care of some date changes, so the measure has to go back to the Senate for a concurrence and a revote in the Senate. That action is a mere formality, so for all purposes, SSB 5702 is on its way to the Governor. Thank you to all of the assessors who have helped on this over the last two years and thanks to the representatives from the timber industry, both large and small, and the landowners who worked with us in this effort as well.

The measure did not pass the House without a little bit of last minute controversy. There was a concern raised that the bill would have some significant effect on the state’s share of the compensating taxes. Once the legislators understood that it was not a reduction from ten to nine years, but a reduction of only the number of months within the tenth year, and that the fiscal impact to the state would be minimal, the measure then proceeded to the floor for passage. Special thanks go to Representative Mark Doumit, who worked the bill behind the scenes to ensure that the fiscal concerns were addressed and to Representative Bob Sump and Representative Phil Rockefeller, both of whom spoke in favor of the measure. If assessors have not sent a thank you note to their representatives for voting for SSB 5702, they should do so promptly. The ability to adequately representative officials in Olympia is dependent upon the fact that when favorable actions are taken, the information gets back home and the officials acknowledge their legislators for good work.

COMPENSATING TAX/DEATH WINDOW
SHB 1450 was amended in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. The primary reason was to reduce the fiscal impact. As passed by the House, it was estimated that it would cost approximately $90,000 per year in state revenues. The bill was amended to reduce the fiscal note to approximately $25,000. The amended bill now allows for any owner whose spouse has passed away since 1991, to have a two-year window from the time the bill passes to remove their property without having to pay compensating taxes. That two-year window appears to be available for anyone whose spouse passes away between the effective date of the act and the end of that two-year period. These individuals would not have a full two years to make a decision, but would still potentially have that opportunity. Now that the legislature has recognized this inequity, the assessors have two years to go back and persuade the landowners who worked with us in this effort as well.

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE REQUEST LEGISLATION
SHB 1202 and SHB 1467 both passed from the Senate Ways & Means Committee. SHB 1202 was the measure for which we offered the amendment that allows for electronic filing of personal property affidavits. However, due to an oversight, that amendment was not adopted in the committee, but instead will be offered as a floor amendment when the measure reaches the floor of the Senate. Calls to the Senate Rules Committee members asking for favorable action on SHB 1202 and SHB 1467 would be appreciated.

SHORT ROTATION HARD WOODS
SHB 1024 is on the Senate Calendar and SB 5108 is in the House Rules Committees. At this point in time, it is almost certain that one of the two measures will pass. Both bills extend the years allowed for the growth from ten to 15 years.

LAKE CUSHMAN/LEASEHOLD EXCISE TAX
HB 1055 has passed the Senate. This allows for the individuals with subleases at Lake Cushman to pay an amount equal to the property tax that will be distributed as normal property taxes.

PARK MODEL MOBILE HOMES
SHB 2184 passed the Senate Ways & Means Committee. It allows park model mobile homes, after their initial sale, to pay only the real estate excise tax rather than a sales tax. In effect, it treats park model mobile homes the same as other manufactured housing.

HIGHER EDUCATION/HOSPITALS
ESHB 2191 passed from the Senate Ways & Means Committee and is now in the Senate Rules Committee. This bill reinstates the exemption for non-profit organizations that purchase and lease properties to be used by institutions of higher education. Only
recently, the Department of Revenue (DOR) determined that those properties were not eligible for exemption, so this is simply a “status quo” measure.

**LOW-INCOME HOUSING MODIFICATIONS**

**ESB 5872** is in the House Rules Committee. This is a measure that makes modifications to the low-income housing statutes, so that an entire property does not lose its exemption if one of the units is sold to someone who no longer qualifies for the exemption.

**ATTENTION SHERIFFS**

Sheriff's Legislative Priority - **HB 1560** restricting the use of the term “sheriff” and “sheriffs posse” is now in the Rules Committee. **Sheriffs please contact your Senate Rules members as soon as possible asking them to pull the bill!** The members of the Senate Rules Committee are: Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen, Chair; Senator Rosa Franklin (D-29), Vice Chair; Senator Larry Sheahan (R-9) Ranking Minority Member; Senator Dow Constantine (D-34); Senator Jeri Costa (D-38); Senator Alex Deccio (R-14); Senator Tracey Eide (D-30); Senator Georgia Gardner (D-42); Senator Patricia Hale (R-8); Senator Harold Hochstatter (R-13); Senator Jim Horn (R-41); Senator Stephen Johnson (R-47); Senator Betti Sheldon (D-23); Senator Paull Shin (D-21); Senator Sid Snyder (D-19); Senator Harriet Spanel (D-40); and Senator James West (R-6). If you need phone numbers or email addresses please contact Brenda Bamford at 360-586-4219 Ext. 124 or bbamford@wacounties.org

**SHB 1995**, prohibiting civil forfeitures of property unless the owner has been convicted of a crime, **passed the House on April 5 with 96 yeas, 0 nay, and 2 absent.** The substitute bill will entitle claimants to reasonable attorney fees if the claimant substantially prevails in a forfeiture proceeding. The bill also creates a 12 member workgroup to study whether a requirement for a criminal conviction before forfeiture raises constitutional issues, and the workgroup will also review every civil forfeiture case that took place under state law during 2000. A floor amendment was adopted that increases the number of members on the committee to 16. The number of legislators who will serve on the workgroup will increase to four members from each house instead of two. If you have any questions about this article, please contact Brenda Bamford @ bbamford@wacounties.org or 360-586-4219.

**SB 5127**, an act relating to determining the number of unclassified personnel in the sheriff’s office, was passed out of House Commerce & Labor Committee on March 30 and is now in the Rules Committee. This bill increases the number of positions that may be exempted from classified civil service in county sheriff offices with more than 250 employees, and it also increases the number of administrative positions that may be exempted in county sheriff’s offices in counties operating under a home rule charter with a population of more than 500,000.

Offices with at least 251 but not more than 500 employees may exempt up to eight positions, and offices with more than 500 employees may exempt up to 10 positions. The number of additional administrative positions that the legislative authority may exempt from classified service in a county that has a population of 500,000 or more and operates under a home rule charter is increased from 12 to 20.

**HB 1062**, an act relating to certification of peace officers, was amended and passed out of Senate Judiciary on April 2, and is now in Senate Rules. As amended, this bill requires that all peace officers obtain and maintain certification as a condition of continuing employment. The Criminal Justice Training Commission is given authority to certify officers, to investigate complaints against officers, and to file charges against an officer if the commission finds probable cause to believe that certification should be revoked. If a hearing is requested by the officer, the commission must appoint a five member panel to determine if decertification should occur. The standard of proof is clear, cogent, and convincing evidence.

**FEW COURT REFORM BILLS STILL ALIVE**

The Legislature began the 2001 session considering a comprehensive package of so-called court reform bills, as recommended by the Project 2001 court reform task force, the Board for Judicial Administration, and the State Supreme Court. As we enter the waning weeks of the session, a few of these proposals are still alive. They are:

- **SSB 5472**, relating to city contracts with counties for municipal court services. Repeals the 10-year requirement for contracts with counties to provide municipal court services, and establishes a minimum one-year notice requirement for either a city or a county to terminate contracts for municipal court services. This bill is headed to governor’s desk after passing both the House and Senate. (Supported by WSAC legislative steering committee.)
• **ESB 5394 & ESJR 8208**, relating to appointment of judges pro tempore. Allows appointment of a judge pro tempore in Superior Court, without agreement of the parties, if the judge pro tem is a sitting elected judge and is appointed pursuant to a Supreme Court rule that considers the judge’s experience. This bill and companion constitutional amendment are on the House floor calendar. If passed by the House, they will require Senate concurrence on a minor amendment. (Supported by WSAC legislative steering committee.)

• **Sec. 113(8) SSB 5345 (Senate budget),** $1.6 million to provide an additional $15 per day juror pay. This is in lieu of **HB 1141**, which would have provided an additional $35 per day juror pay. This budget proviso also is voluntary: Counties that want to increase juror pay may contract with the state Office of the Administrator of the Courts to be reimbursed up to an additional $15 per day. (WSAC legislative steering committee opposed the original proposal as too costly.)

### DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

**BILLS OF INTEREST**

**HB 1216**, sudden infant death, passed the Senate April 5.  
**HB 1611**, missing person records, and **HB 1613**, unidentified person information, are both in the Senate Rule Committee.

### COURTS

**BILLS PASSING THE SENATE**

On Wednesday, the Senate passed **EHB 1864**, family law court files, and **SHB 1591**, service of anti-harassment orders by publication. **EHB 1864** was a 2000 priority of the county clerks and represents extensive collaboration among the State Bar Association, the Division of Child Support, the County Clerks, and the Administrator for the Courts. **EHB 1864** allows removal of personal and financial information from family law court files and drastically reduces the risk of identity theft.

**TAX WARRANTS**

**SHB 1793**, tax warrants, is on the “green sheet” in Senate Rules. One more “pull” will take it to the Senate floor for a vote of the full membership. Its companion, **SSB 5115**, met its demise in the House Appropriations Committee. County clerks are urged to contact their senators on Rules to request just one more “pull” and then all senators to urge passage of **SHB 1793**. Senators should be reminded that counties lose money every time a warrant for unpaid taxes and that the filing fee is ultimately collected from the delinquent taxpayer. The filing fee is at least 40 years old and the cost of doing business has gone up in the counties too!

**JURIES**

**SSB 5070**, limiting juror service, is on the House Floor Calendar.

### ENVIRONMENT, LAND USE & RESOURCES

**SB 5107 ALTERNATIVES TO GMA FAILS TO MEET HOUSE CUT-OFF**

**SB 5107** was heard in House Local Government Committee, Monday, March 26 and as indicated in last week’s bulletin there was mixed testimony with cities and counties supporting the bill and APA and Thousand Friends opposing the bill. The Committee did not take executive action by March 30th in order for this bill to be considered for further action. This would have allowed rural counties to develop alternative methods of achieving GMA planning goals. The bill defines a rural county as a county with a population density of less than 100 persons per square mile. The alternative may not be used to change the authority of GMA hearings boards regarding designation and protection of critical areas and natural resource lands, siting of essential public facilities, and adoption of a capital facilities plan element. Please contact Jackie White, WSAC staff, for questions or comments.

**MANDATORY 120-DAY LAND USE BILL (ESHB 1458)**

Last week the Senate State and Local Government Committee passed out this bill after amending it by clarifying that local governments should not exceed 120 days in processing permits or setting project type deadlines, but may do so in both cases when written findings are made. The striking amendment also clarifies that the proposed new language doesn’t retroactively affect any local ordinances in effect prior to July 1, 2001—the effective date of this legislation. And, it establishes a 2-year study for the buildable land counties and the cities within to produce documentation on permit processing performance by project type. It makes this reporting due yearly instead of quarterly, and eliminates the requirement that it be maintained in perpetuity. This bill now is before the Senate for consideration. Please contact Jackie White, WSAC staff, for questions or comments.
SHORELINES/GMA/CAO TIMELINES STILL ALIVE

Negotiations are still active on ESSB 5378 despite the bill not being assigned to a Committee and not making the March 30th cutoff. This bill is also the vehicle to extend GMA/CAO (Critical Area Ordinance) timelines. WSAC staff has not given up hope that a compromise could be reached. Any compromise must include adequate time and funding to revise shoreline master programs, an agricultural exemption and other relief from new regulatory requirements for counties whose land base is predominately resource lands.

HUMAN SERVICES, JUVENILE JUSTICE & HOUSING

JUVENILE JUSTICE

SB 5692, youth courts, is in the House Rules Committee. WACO members are urged to contact their House Rules members and ask them to “pull” SB 5692. SB 5692 is a WACO priority bill and a great diversion tool for juvenile offenders. Ask Snohomish County – it works!

GRANT COUNTY MENTAL HEALTHCARE EARNS NATIONAL STANDARDS

Grant County Mental Healthcare just completed a two-year process to gain full accreditation with the highest score for a community mental health center in Washington State. The agency with the support of the Grant County Commissioners voluntarily opted to tackle the tough accreditation process conducted by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Behavioral Healthcare Organizations. Sharon Kiehn, Grant Mental Healthcare Executive Director, called the process a huge undertaking.

One of the JCABHO surveyors said Grant Mental Healthcare had the best system of measuring, training, and assuring staff competencies he has ever seen.

Grant is among the first of five mental health centers in Washington undergoing the accreditation process among a statewide population of 60 community mental health centers. Kiehn indicated it was no time to sit on the agency’s laurels. “We have to systematically improve constantly, across the board. This keeps us assessing system problems and solving them as they arise.”

The mission of the Joint Commission is to continuously improve the safety and quality of care provided to the public through the provision of health care accreditation and support performance improvement in healthcare organizations. There are one thousand chapter standards which are designed to ensure that clinicians on staff have the necessary skills to provide adequate and appropriate services. The standards also address an organization’s level of performance in key areas such as patient rights.

Grant Mental Healthcare has grown since its inception in 1969. It’s community based services are offered throughout Grant County with offices in Moses Lake, Grand Coulee and Quincy. The staff numbers 75 with a full range of mental health services provided. Last year they served 2,271 individuals and took 2,583 crisis calls. Kiehn applauds the commitment of her staff.

Congratulations Grant County.

SEX OFFENDER SITING IGNITES PASSIONS IN COMMUNITY AND LEGISLATURE

HB 2168, SB 5845, and SB 6151 are just three of the many bills dealing with sex offenders, and in particular, the siting of less restrictive alternative residential facilities. They are the three remaining bills dealing with siting and will provide the final vehicles prior to final enactment of legislation.

HB 2168 has been amended to only deal with Department of Corrections and Juvenile Rehabilitation facilities, such as work-release and group homes respectively. A large group of stakeholders worked on one troublesome passage to ensure that local governments would not be required to complete an entirely new and costly planning process to add these facilities to their essential public facilities policies. The new language is being written as we go to press but will allow the planning process to be part of regular updates to comp plans that run out as far as 2007. One of the main interests of the sponsors was that the state agencies and local governments work hand in hand on siting these facilities in an equitable fashion throughout the state.

SB 5845 will deal only with less restrictive alternative residential facilities for sexually violent predators released after treatment at the Special Commitment Center. These clients might come directly from the SCC or come from the 36-bed facility being considered for siting on McNeil Island. There are still some issues about the local government planning process and it appears the troublesome passage will be deleted from the bill assuring that there will not be any unfunded mandates placed on local government. The bill includes a laundry list of criteria as well as an extensive public notification process.

SB 6151 combines two very contentious issues. Part of the bill includes the siting of a 36-bed facility on McNeil Island. Pierce County and its cities are extremely disturbed by the addition of this facility to a county and community that has done what many
consider to be “its fair share” in siting less than popular facilities. In combination with proposed reductions in RSN funding, bed re-allocation at Western State Hospital and downsizing of Western State Hospital, the county is naturally feeling overwhelmed.

The remainder of SB 6151 deals with returning certain sex offenders to an indeterminate sentencing structure and to a great extent reversing the trend toward civil commitment which remains subject to constant court review. Sentences and parole have the possibility of being greatly extended by this legislation up to and including life sentences or life parole.

Most have seen or heard about John Ladenburg, Pierce County Executive, tearing up the lease for the ferry dock in Steilacoom, which the county owns and leases to the state to use for ferry service to McNeil Island. Needless to say, both local government officials and local legislators are both greatly disturbed. However, it appears some form of legislation will pass this session due to the duress of being under the gun of Judge Dwyer of the federal district court to have some sort of less restrictive alternative for these offenders to transition into after completing treatment in the secure facility of the Special Commitment Center.

All three bills are alive and moving toward final passage.

**AUDITORS**

**Elections**

SB 5273, both a WACO and WSACA priority bill, has passed both the House and the Senate and is on its way to the Governor for his signature. Under the provisions of the bill, when there are special circumstances which require a special filing period for persons filing for office, the filing period is moved back two weeks, from four weeks to six weeks, to allow sufficient time to prepare the ballots for mailing. Please call your legislators, both House and Senate members, to thank them for their support of this bill.

SSB 5275, the absentee/mail ballot bill is still in the House Rules Committee. There was an amendment made to section 2 of the bill, which would have allowed a voter to obtain an absentee ballot on the day of the election. The bill was amended to keep the existing language where a voter can obtain an absentee ballot no later than the day before an election. In the interest of saving the bill, auditors were amenable to the amendment. Please call your House Rules members and ask that this bill be pulled from Rules.

ESSB 5904, which revises procedures for choosing conservation district supervisors, is on the House calendar. Suzanne Sinclair had testified on the bill last week, supporting an amendment by Senator Morton that would require conservation districts to notify the county auditor of the affected county by May 1 of the year in which an election is to take place, and that the election is to be conducted under Title 29.

SHB 1644, while not a WSACA bill, is a good bill that clarifies recount procedures. This bill is a Secretary of State request bill and is in the Senate Rules Committee. If you have a Senator on Senate Rules Committee, please contact them and ask this bill be pulled.

**Licensing**

SSB 5274, which includes the sub-agent fee increase language, as well as the language regarding the transfers of sub-agencies to children, siblings and employees of the existing owner of a sub-agency, has been placed on the House 2nd reading calendar. The bill passed out of the House Transportation committee with a striking amendment offered by Representative Shirley Hankins. The amendment, in addition to the language of SSB 5274, adds the 50-cent to the current filing fee that is to be deposited into the Licensing Services Account. The 50-cent fee was eliminated under I-695. These funds are to be used for support and maintenance of sub-agent and auditors vehicle licensing equipment. Please ask your House members to support this bill.

Other bills of interest to County Auditors that have passed the legislature are: The Office of the Secretary of State “Election Integrity” bill, SHB 1739. This bill has a number of provisions that strengthen the laws surrounding voter registration. ESB 5053, regarding the Uniform Commercial Code, has also passed the legislature.

**TREASURERS**

**Treasurers’ Cleanup Bill**

SB 5638, making technical corrections in county treasurers’ statutes, has made it to the floor of the House. Please call House members and urge your support of this WACO/Treasurers’ Legislative Priority.
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASK FORCE IN TROUBLE
Included in the current House Supplemental Budget is a section that would end the Joint Task Force on Local Governments on March 30, 2001, which is one year earlier than in current law. The Senate amended the House Budget, adding this repealer, and sent it back to the House for concurrence. Please call your House members and ask them NOT to concur with Sec. 901 of HB 1314. It is imperative that the Task Force be allowed to continue forward with its important work.

The Local Government Task Force was created last year to evaluate the delivery of government services, the allotment of revenues, and the collection and distribution of various fines and forfeitures. The work of the Task Force will culminate in the presentation of a comprehensive report and proposed legislation to the Legislature in January of 2002. WACO and WSAC each have two members on the Task Force, with other members being legislators, and representatives of both the Association of Washington Cities and the Governor’s office.

ARCHIVES
HB 1926, an act relating to local government records, is waiting action in the 2001/03 Capital Budget. The monies and contracting authorization to fund a regional electronic records facility in eastern Washington are included in the Senate Budget but passage of HB 1926 is still essential to the construction. HB 1926 removes the sunset on the $1 surcharge collected by county auditors to fund local records archiving; increases the fee to $2 to fund the digital facility; and, splits the second dollar between the archives (for local records only) and the counties when the debt service on the building is paid.

SALARY COMMISSIONS
HB 1084, an act establishing independent salary commissions to set salaries for city and town elected officials and county commissioners and council members, moved out of the Senate Rules Committee late Wednesday afternoon and was placed on the Senate floor calendar. HB 1084 authorizes cities and counties to appoint independent ten-member commissions to establish salaries that are then incorporated into the respective budgets without further action by the legislative authority. Any increase or decrease in salaries is subject to a referendum petition by residents and submitted to voters in the next general election. A valid referendum petition stays all salary changes until the election.

OF GENERAL INTEREST

MORE ON COST ALLOCATION PLANS
The Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Support Enforcement Project (WAPA-SEP) sponsored follow-up training on development of cost allocation plans for county fiscal folks in Olympia this week. The cost allocation plans are a requirement if counties wish to bill the Department of Child Support (DCS) for the indirect costs associated with enforcement of federal IV-D child support. Cost allocation training was offered by WAPA-SEP and WACO in two locations last fall. This session builds on the overview given in 2000.

Retired federal auditor Larry Lufkin, class instructor, was rated “the best instructor I have had in a long time,” while the class itself received marks of “exceptionally good” and an “A+.” Those attending spent two days with a “hands-on” curriculum and small group participation and left “now knowing the procedure for developing a simplified indirect cost allocation plan.”

WAPA-SEP plans to conduct the same training in six locations around the state. The six locations will be selected to minimize travel distances for counties to the greatest extent possible. The target group is county personnel who are responsible for development of cost allocation plans, including county auditors, financial directors and grant administrators. More information will be published as it becomes available.

COMING EVENTS

April
11 Labor negotiations training for sheriffs and command staff, Lacey Community Center, Lacey, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Sheriffs’ Association and the Criminal Justice Training Commission.
19-20 WSAC Eastern District Meeting, Colville
22-28 National County Government Week.
25-27 WA Assn of Prosecuting Attorneys’ (WAPA) Annual Spring Training Program, WestCoast Olympia Hotel, Olympia.
26-28 WA State Assn of County Clerks and Superior Court Administrators’ Joint Conference, Lakeway Inn, Bellingham.
May
7-9 Washington State Association of County Auditors’ Elections Conference, Yakima.
23-26 National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Annual Western Interstate Region (WIR) Conference, Hilton Waikoloa Village, Hilo, Hawaii

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Executive Director - The Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) is seeking an Executive Director. WACO is a private non-profit association of county officials of thirty-nine counties. This full-time position in Olympia, Washington, plans, directs, coordinates and administers association and staff activities under the policies established by the WACO Board of Trustees; represents WACO before the Legislature; and meets with state agencies, other associations and county officials to coordinate activities relating to county operations; as well as plans and develops programs, budgets, etc. Requirements: A comprehensive knowledge and experience in county government; knowledge of laws, court decisions, and opinions governing county government operations; and possess excellent oral, written, and organizational skills. Applications with a resume and a cover letter are due by 05/01/01 at 5:00 p.m. Application packets are available by calling WACO at (360) 753-7319, at 206 Tenth Avenue SE, Olympia, WA 98501-1311, or khouts@wacounties.org. EOE

Whatcom County, Bellingham, has a challenging opportunity for two Facilities Technical Specialists at Whatcom County, the state's sixth fastest growing county! Are you a skilled technician who enjoys challenges and the chance to apply your diverse skills? We provide a full employer-paid benefits package, including medical, dental and vision coverage for employees, spouses and eligible dependents, and life insurance for employees. State retirement and deferred compensation plans also available, along with generous vacation, sick leave and holiday benefits. Both positions require HS diploma or GED. Hiring range: $16.07-$17.35/hr, DOQ. Electrical/Electronic - Requires 5 yrs. industrial electrical/electronic systems experience, (incl. HVAC electrical background), OR equiv. Preventive Maintenance - Requires 5 yrs. progressively responsible experience in preventive maintenance of facilities, (incl. HVAC mechanical background), OR equiv. Application period closes 4/16/01. For application materials contact Whatcom County Human Resources, (360) 676-6802, Bellingham, WA. For detailed job announcement visit our website at www.co.whatcom.wa.us or call the jobline at (360) 738-4550. Equal Opportunity Employer

Associate or Assistant Community/Land Use Planner Cowlitz County Building & Planning Department Cowlitz County is accepting applications for the position of Associate or Assistant Community/Land Use Planner (placement will depend on the qualifications of the person hired). This position focuses on the administration of short subdivision applications, but also completes a wide variety of tasks in the administration of current planning regulations within the planning division of the department. Requirements for Assistant Community/Land Use Planner: Bachelor’s Degree in urban and regional planning or related field, from an accredited college/university. Familiarity with principles and practices of land use planning, zoning administration, and subdivision design and development. Able to interpret and explain land use regulations. Some familiarity with environmental planning and regulations. Able to communicate effectively orally and in writing. Able to produce effective presentations, produce hand and electronic graphics. Able to analyze and interpret topographic maps, aerial photographs, and other plan drawings. Able to develop and maintain efficient working relations and communication with the department’s management team, other departments or agencies’ staff, and the general public. Able to perform field investigations in a variety of site conditions. Multi-task, time management skills, and prioritize accordingly. Possess and maintain a valid driver’s license. Starting Salary: $2,743 per month, with subsequent annual step increases to $2,895 and $3,045. Requirements for Associate Community/Land Use Planner: A minimum of two years experience in the administration of land use regulations or graduate course work and experience equaling two years. All other the minimum requirements listed above for Assistant Community/Land Use Planner. Starting Salary: $3,232 per month, with subsequent annual step increases to $3,412 and $3,591. Applications and job description can be obtained by visiting Administrative Services at 207 Fourth Ave., North, Kelso, WA or calling (360) 577-3065 or TDD (360) 577-3061. Applications must be returned to Administrative Services. This position will remain open until filled. Cowlitz County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.