Legislative Cutoff Dates: Today—March 1—is the last day for bills to pass out of the opposite house, except House fiscal committees and the Senate Ways and Means and Transportation Committees. Those committees have a cutoff date of Monday, March 4. Friday, March 8, is the last day for legislators to consider bills from the opposite house (except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, amendments, differences, and business related to the interim or closing the session). The last day allowed for regular session under the state constitution is Thursday, March 14.

General Tax Increases?
So Far, All Hat and No Horse

For the last two weeks, the press has widely reported anything said by any legislator regarding statewide tax increases. To outside observers, the press reports created the impression that the state was about to raise a cornucopia of new revenues.

This week the majorities in each house met in their caucuses and counted votes. The conclusion—no general statewide tax increases to close the state budget gap. It was also clear that the level of cuts needed to balance the budget also lacked the needed votes. Each majority caucus has decided on a way to approach this problem. In the Senate, leaders said they planned to put out a no-new-taxes budget. Interest groups wanting restore their programs would then have to find the 25 votes needed to raise the revenues for their programs. Some people wonder if ticket sales for the ensuing “over the ropes battle royal” would raise an appreciable amount of revenue. The most recent House caucus approach would solve half the $1.5 billion problem with cuts and half with borrowing against future tobacco settlement receipts. By the time you read this, plans may have changed.

So where is local government in all of this? Cuts to public health are likely to be more drastic than those proposed by the Governor. Funding may be terminated as early as July 1, 2002. Each chamber has penciled in a small amount for assistance to small counties. This money may disappear.

In the midst of all this gloom there was some good news. Many legislators seem more aware than ever of the problem faced by counties. Legislators from both parties are working with county representatives to craft state and local revenue options. A number of legislators that formerly opposed local revenue options are now engaging in positive discussions. There is some movement in the city attitude to county-wide revenue options. Equalization cities have grown more desperate for assistance but are finding that the Legislature is not sympathetic. The only way equalization cities can get any assistance is if they provide votes to help sup-

WASPC Rally on Wednesday

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) is planning to rally their members in Olympia and carry the message of the plight of law enforcement statewide to legislators on the hill. The evaporation of law and justice monies to cities and counties is a concern to all. WASPC members will meet at the WASPC office at 9:00 a.m. on March 6. Please contact Linda McHenry at (360) 586-3221 or lindamchenry@thurston.com.
Budget, Finance and Taxes

General Tax Increases?
(Continued from page 1)

port a county assistance package.

We think counties are close to hav-
ing a package that will enjoy support
within the county family and be accept-
able to cities and the Legislature. The
weeks ahead will be full of uncertainty.
The situation is incredibly volatile. Leg-
islators are facing pressure from many
groups. We need to stay high on their
list.

Treasurers’ Request Bill
SB 6466, the Treasurers’ Association
cleanup bill, passed out of the House
Local Government Committee on Thurs-
day. Treasurers need to call the House
Rules Committee members and ask for
the bill to be “pulled” to the floor calen-
dar. The cutoff for bills to pass the op-
posite house is next Friday, March 8, so
time is of the essence. House Rules
Committee members are Representatives
Chopp, Dunshee, Eickmeyer, Grant,
Haigh, Hatfield, Hurst, Kessler, Kirby,
Ogden, Reardon, Santos, Ballard, Buck,
Bush, DeBolt, Hankins, Lisk, Mastin,
Mulliken, and Woods. A small amend-
ment tightening up some language will
be offered on the floor.

Fire Districts/Warrants
SHB 2169, relating to fire districts’ op-
tions for issuing warrants, was passed
out of the Senate State and Local Gov-
ernment Committee with amendments
that the treasurers had suggested. The
amended bill adds a $1 million dollar
minimum above which the option to pay
funds by warrants is permitted. Summa-
ring the bill as it now stands—for fire
protection districts with annual operating
budgets between $1 million and $5 mil-
lion in each of the preceding three
years—the county treasurer and the fire
protection district commission can agree
that the district issue its own warrants
through the county treasurer and district
secretary.

Port Districts/Issuing
Checks and Warrants
HB 2571, authorizing port districts who
have their own treasurer to pay claims or
other obligations by check or warrant, is
in the Senate Rules Committee.

Distribution of Taxes
HB 2467, requiring the county treasurer
to remit to a taxing district with its own
treasurer that district’s pro rata share of
the previous month’s taxes by the 10th
of the next month, is in the Senate Rules
Committee.

The Courthouse Journal
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and the Washington State Association
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We welcome your suggestions and
contributions. The weekly deadline is
noon Thursday.

Direct inquiries and correspondence
to The Courthouse Journal, 206 Tenth
Avenue SE, Olympia, WA 98501-1131.

WACO STAFF
Phone (360) 753-7319
FAX (360) 664-2812

Debbie Wilke, Executive Director
Michelle Hagen, Deputy Director
Christina Bridston, Programs Coordinator
Brenda Bamford, Financial Operations
Manager
Kathie Houts, Administrative Assistant

WSAC STAFF
Phone (360) 753-1886
FAX (360) 664-2812

Bill Vogler, Executive Director
Paul Parker, Assistant Executive Director
Maureen Morris, Deputy Director for
Urban Counties
Sophia Byrd, Policy Director, Law & Justice
Jean Wessman, Policy Director, Human
Services, Juvenile Justice, Housing
Jackie White, Policy Director, Transportation
and Land Use
Vicki Kirkpatrick, Policy Director,
WSALPHO Administrator
Tom King, Associate, Research,
Telecommunications
Jim Potts, Housing Outreach Coordinator
Sally Harrington, Business & Investment
Manager
Kim Zydek, Administrative Secretary
Ginni Peppert, Secretary
Tom Robinson, Timber Coordinator
Cynthia Sachs, Policy Analyst
County Clerks’ Bills
Score 3 for 4
SB 6401, county clerks cleanup, SB 6402, collection of inmate legal financial obligations, and, SB 6417, filing of wills, have all passed out of their respective committees and are currently in the House Rules Committee. SB 6458, jury fees, failed to garner support in the House Judiciary Committee and was not scheduled for executive action.

SB 5253, another jury fee bill, failed as well. The next cutoff is March 8, the last day for the houses to consider bills from the opposite house. County clerks are urged to contact House Rules members and their representatives to urge passage of SB 6401, SSB 6402, and SB 6417.

Offender Update
SSB 6240, restoring voting rights of felons, gained a second breath of life after gasping mid-week. The bill was removed from the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee schedule, but sneak back on and received a “do pass.” Superior Court Judges are not in favor of the bill and neither are county clerks. SSB 6240 requires the court to send a certificate of discharge to the offender at his last known address and deliver a copy to the county auditor in the county where the court is located. There is no appropriation to support the job, and all agree that sending the certificate to one county auditor won’t do anything for the offender. Many reside in other counties or have counts in more than one county that have to be addressed.

Counts or have counts in more than one county where the court is located. There is no appropriation to support the job, and all agree that sending the certificate to one county auditor won’t do anything for the offender. Many reside in other counties or have counts in more than one county that have to be addressed. County clerks are urged to contact their House members and ask for a “no” vote and are urged to encourage local judges to do the same.

ESSB 6499, supervision of offenders, and its counterpart, HB 2717, still live and breathe since they are consid-
ered necessary to implement the budget. Stay tuned.

Youth Courts
ESSB 5692, youth courts, moved out of the House Juvenile Justice and Family Law Committee on Thursday and is now in the House Rules Committee. The implementation of youth courts has been a WACO priority for two years. County officials are all encouraged to contact their House members in support of ESSB 5692.

Miscellaneous Bill Status
SHB 2468, offender DNA databank, is in the Senate Rules Committee.

HB 2407, regional jails, is in the Senate Rules Committee. (WACO Priority).

HB 2595, regional jails, is in the Senate Rules Committee. (WACO Priority)

SSB 6404, deputies in district court, is in the Senate Rules Committee.

D.A.R.E. Car for Sale
Lincoln County has available for purchase a 1999 Pontiac Firebird convertible used for its DARE program. The car has 14,522 miles on it, is white with unique DARE logos and designs and has custom tires and wheels. If you are interested in a real “show stopper” for your DARE program, contact Sheriff John Coley (509) 725-9263 for more details.

Controversial Transportation Package Adopted by Committee
The House Transportation Committee passed a statewide package (SHB 2969) on a partisan vote. A heated debate took place after it was clear that there was not agreement from the republican members of the committee, and the bill passed out with a partisan vote of 15-12. The “Eight Cent” gas tax referendum now raises $6.088 billion dollars of new revenue (bonded) over 10 years; $1.16 billion of this revenue may be used for non-highway purposes. A direct distribution of one penny will be distributed evenly between counties, cities and the Transportation Improvement Board. In addition, the proposal now contains $580 million dedicated for transit purposes. Please see the attached worksheet for more details. The House is scheduled to take this bill up on the floor on Friday, March 01.

Prior to taking up the statewide transportation revenue bill, the House Transportation Committee passed out several controversial bills in an attempt to gain republican support for the revenue package. One of the bills (HB 2992) was a measure to mandate that counties and cities could collect transportation impact fees at the time of home title transfer to the occupant, the certificate of occupancy, or twelve months after the building permit is issued. This would place an additional burden on local governments to collect the funds, and it could potentially reduce the amount counties receive if they are unable to collect the fees. It may also delay the necessary projects.

A regional transportation proposal is still under negotiation between the House and the Senate.

Bills of Note
SSB 6643, and its companion HB 2700, the Local Transportation funding option bill, still await action by both houses. (Please refer to last week Courthouse Journal for details.) We are told that these bills will be part of the final discussion on the transportation revenue package.

SSB 6350, allowing counties to use the county road fund in order to participate in state projects, passed the House Transportation Committee and is now in the House Rules Committee.

Please contact WSAC staff member Jackie White for additional information.
**Public Health and Human Services**

**Food Service Bill Preempting Local Government Just Keeps Moving Along**

ESSB 6588 passed the Senate amid much controversy and became the cutoff bill in the Senate. It was referred to the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee where it received a hearing. This bill preempts local government from ever passing a food rule more stringent than the state food code except for a limited period of time to respond to an emergency that threatens the public health or safety of the citizens of its communities. It would also preempt local government from addressing a food safety issue locally even if the state food code didn’t address it. Furthermore, it vests sole interpretation authority in the State Department of Health. This bill language effectively removes any ability for the local health jurisdiction to use discretion and flexibility when working with individual food service establishments within its jurisdiction. We believe this bill will produce unintended consequences that can negatively impact the small “mom and pop” food service business. ESSB 6588 has passed out of Committee and has been referred to the House Rules Committee. There is a fiscal note attached to this bill, and we are waiting to see if it gets re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee. The State Board of Health has begun the rule revision process for updating the state food code. All stakeholders agree that the state food code is badly outdated. We believe that the updated food code will resolve most of the industry concerns around consistency from county to county and that preemption is both unnecessary and potentially contrary to good public health protection.

**Environment, Land Use and Resources**

**Land Use and GMA Economic Development Bills Pass Senate Committee**

Thursday afternoon the Senate State and Local Government Committee passed two bills out of committee. One, **EHB 2498**, expanded a pilot program allowing counties to create industrial land banks outside of their urban growth areas and extends the time frame from 2002 out to 2007. This bill adds more counties to the list of those authorized to plan for these industrial areas; the original counties included Clark, Whatcom, Lewis, Grant, and Clallam. Now Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties are included as well. Mason County was also added during the Committee hearing. Several of the counties that have begun their industrial land programs have found them to be constructive and economically beneficial.

Also passed out of the Senate State and Local Government Committee was **HB 2697**, which adds economic development as well as parks and recreation as required elements of county and city comprehensive plans under the Growth Management Act. Several amendments were added to this bill before it left the committee, including: changing “economic assessments” to “economic summaries”; providing that the new elements would only be added during scheduled comprehensive plan reviews; and exempting residential communities from these new elements. **HB 2697** is on its way to the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

**Finally a Compromise on GMA Timeline Extensions in the House**

After many hours of hard work by WSAC staff, Association of Washington Cities (AWC) staff, and representatives from the business community, environmental community, Governor’s staff, and Office of Community Development staff, a compromise was finally reached to extend the deadlines for local growth management plans. This issue has been a high priority of both WSAC and AWC and the for the last two sessions. The current statutes now require all GMA planning jurisdictions to review and update, if necessary, local GMA plans and development regulations by September 2002. A bill that was introduced last session, **SB 5841**, would establish new deadlines beginning in 2003 for critical area ordinances and 2004 for comprehensive plans over a four-year period. The Senate passed **SB 5841** late last session, but the House did not take action. This session, the Senate placed the bill directly on the floor calendar with the intention of passing it quickly to the House without amendments. This week the House Local Government and Housing Committee passed the bill without a striking amendment, 11-0 votes.

ESSB 5841 stagers the timeline for counties and their cities from December 2004 thru 2007 and requires the plans to be updated every seven years thereafter. The bill clarifies that when a review or update must occur, a city or county shall take legislative action. Such action may change or retain existing ordinances. There are no new requirements and no new sanctions for non-compliance stipulated in the bill; “best available science” language is not addressed or changed. **HB 2846**, a bill that removes the requirement to comply with the buildable lands provisions unless the state funds at least $2.5 million, still awaits action by the House Appropriations Committee. This bill is exempt from the policy cut-off.

Please contact WSAC staff member Jackie White for questions or comments.

**Water Reform Bill Finally Introduced**

Representative Kelli Linville (D-Whatcom County) this week introduced **HB 2993**, a water policy bill including many of the topics discussed over the last six months by the Joint Executive-Legislative Group on water law reform. The bill was heard on Thursday evening in the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee, which Rep. Linville chairs, and was compared to the elephant described by the blind men. Almost everyone who testified described it differently—some said it would be the end of agriculture in Washington, and others said it would be the death of fish. The

(Continued on page 5)
truth probably lies somewhere in between.

But one thing has been true throughout the negotiations over this issue: one thing that agriculture, the business community, the municipalities, and the environmental community all have agreed upon as they have looked at previous drafts of water legislation since November, is that none of them trust the state to follow through.

As WSAC reads HB 2993, it provides small steps forward to address in-stream flow setting and relinquishment. It makes larger steps forward on addressing certainty and flexibility for municipal water rights. The bill also addresses some topics not included in the original purview of the September–October framework: ag-to-ag transfers, clarification of stockwatering, required hook-ups to public water systems, and trust water rights.

The biggest failing of this proposal is that it provides no funding to implement locally crafted solutions to the three main issue areas above. Instream flows for fish cannot be achieved with words on paper alone—it will take money to buy senior water rights, where appropriate and where willing sellers can be found; it will take money to promote and require conservation in residences, businesses and the agricultural sector; and it will take money to build and manage additional storage facilities to augment stream flows, to provide water for agriculture and for people.

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This bill—and the many versions developed by the Joint Executive-Legislative Group—fails to build on the hard work and planning taking place in watersheds across the state and the comprehensive planning done through the Growth Management Act.

WSAC testified that small changes to state statutes alone cannot get the state out of its water mess. The answer may be greater flexibility for local solutions and money to implement them.

Water Reform Bill Finally Introduced

(Continued from page 4)

Shorelines Bills Move Ahead

Legislation to clearly exempt from shoreline management legislation ongoing agricultural activities has moved to the Senate Rules Committee. E SHB 2305 emerged without amendment and is ready to be scheduled for floor action. The Senate Natural Resources, Parks and Shorelines Committee also sent to the Rules Committee EHB 2623, which would raise to $5,000 the dollar threshold for what constitutes development requiring a “substantial development permit” and would require an adjustment to the threshold for inflation every five years. The current dollar amount is $2,500.

Stormwater and HPA Bills Continue to Evolve

Bills addressing stormwater management and the administration of the Department of Fisheries’ Hydraulic Projects Approval (HPA) program have passed from the Senate Natural Resources, Parks and Shorelines Committee. E SHB 2866, by Rep. Mark Doumit (D-Wahkiakum County), and SHB 2757, by Rep. Phil Rockefeller (D-Kitsap County), both address the HPA program. ESHB 2866 is intended to clarify that the Department of Ecology or local governments—and not the Department of Fish and Wildlife—are the lead agency for stormwater permitting. ESHB 2757 establishes an advisory committee to review the entire HPA program and recommend efficiencies and improvements. Both bills were amended in minor ways in Committee.

ESSHB 2847, by Rep. Mike Cooper (D-Snohomish County), may not survive the committee cut-off. The bill—to establish a stormwater advisory committee to work with the Department of Ecology on the implementation of Phase II stormwater planning, the use of the new stormwater manual, and the interaction between state and local stormwater management programs and other programs addressing water quality—ran into some criticism in the Senate Environment, Energy and Water Committee.

Ecology Offers Workshops on Stormwater Manual

Workshops on the new stormwater manual are being offered for state and local regulators and for developers and consulting engineers. The one-day workshops will run from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and include presentations on the manual contents as well as interactive examples and case studies using the manual.

The workshops are offered at the Shoreline Conference Center on March 5, Skagit PUD on March 6, the West-Coast Silverdale Hotel on March 12, and the Best Western Southcenter in Tukwila on March 13. For more information contact Donna Lynch at (360) 407-7529 or dlyn461@ecy.wa.gov.

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Heads Up—Two-year Vehicle Licensing

SB 6494, establishing a two-year vehicle-licensing program, was passed out of the Senate today with a vote of 48 yea, 1 nay. The amended bill contained the increased fees for county auditors and subagents and included the doubling of the money that goes into the Licensing Service Account.

Bills of Interest to County Auditors

ESHB 2453, veterans’ records, was passed out of the Senate State & Local Government Committee yesterday. Senator Haugen offered an amendment that would address the issues that have been raised by county auditors. However, after numerous concerns by members of the committee, the amendment was withdrawn and the bill passed out of committee. Senator Haugen stated that she would like to work with the interested parties to come up with language that would work and offer a striking amendment on the floor.

SSB 6814, which increases 10 different Department of Licensing fees, is in the Senate Rules Committee and was placed on the Second Reading Calendar yesterday.

SHB 2060, which increases the recording fee by $10 to fund low income housing projects, was referred to the Senate Ways & Means Committee on February 26 and is scheduled for a Public Hearing on Friday, March 1 at 3:30 p.m.

Vacancies in Public Office

SB 6529, modifying the time period for holding elections to fill vacancies (Auditors’ Association recommendation), passed out of the House State and Local Government Committee Thursday and is in the House Rules Committee. Auditors should call members of the committee and ask them to pull the bill to the floor calendar. It has to pass out of the House by next Friday, March 8. House Rules Committee members are Representatives Chopp, Dunshee, Eickmeyer, Grant, Haigh, Hatfield, Hurst, Kessler, Kirby, Ogden, Reardon, Santos, Ballard, Buck, Bush, DeBolt, Hankins, Lisk, Mastin, Mulliken, and Woods.

Secretary of State Bills

The following bills all passed out of the House State Government Committee on Thursday and have gone to the House Rules Committee: SB 6321, allowing candidates to file electronically; SB 6323, revising initiative filing fee procedures; SB 6324, directing a statewide voter registration database (companion bill, HB 2332 is in the Senate Rules Committee); and SB 6325, modifying the administration of elections (companion bill, HB 2336 is in Senate Rules).

Conservation District Supervisors

SSB 6572, which specifies that elections of conservation district supervisors are to be conducted according to the conservation district chapter election process, is in the House Rules Committee awaiting a spot on the floor calendar.
Compromise on SB 6465
Good for Everyone
The House Local Government Committee adopted an amendment to SB 6465 (coined by Lewis County Treasurer Rose Bowman and proposed by Representative Joyce Mulliken) that appears satisfactory to all county offices and passed the bill out of committee. SB 6465 is a bill proposed by Clark County officials to implement a one-stop-shopping place in a new facility where citizens have several services available in one location.

The amendment strikes all language following the first sentence of the bill, still allows for the Clark County innovation, but removes all the language that spurred concerns regarding internal controls by county offices. WACO President Barb Cory is “very pleased”, and Rose Bowman, the County Treasurers’ Legislative Chair, is “happy.” Clark County Auditor Greg Kimsey says he is “very appreciative of Treasurer Bowman’s amendment and look[s] forward to working with her and Treasurers’ Association President Linda Wolverton, Spokane County Treasurer.”

All county officials are encouraged to contact their legislators and urge passage of SB 6465 as amended. Lewis County Treasurer Rose Bowman and Clark County Auditor Greg Kimsey are to be commended for their skilled negotiation in reaching agreement on behalf of all the county officials who had an interest in SB 6465.

Forest Resource Plan Review
The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has issued a Determination of Significance pertaining to a proposal that will result in the recalculation of a sustainable harvest level for trust forest lands managed by DNR located in western Washington. This proposal will also include a review and possible amendment of the policies in the Forest Resource Plan that affect the proposed Westside sustainable harvest calculation. Westside sustainable harvest would impact all state trust forested lands west of the Cascade ridge. DNR intends to gather information necessary for the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

The purpose of the proposal is two-fold:
1. To incorporate new information into a new model to recalculate the sustainable time harvest level.
2. To analyze and recalculate a sustainable timber harvest level, to be approved by the Board of Natural Resources.

State law (RCW 79.68.040) requires DNR to periodically adjust the acreages designated for inclusion in the sustained yield management program and to calculate a sustainable harvest level.

Public Meetings will be held at the following locations and dates:

- **Seattle**, Wednesday, March 6
  - Seattle Vocational Institute, Room 401 (4th Floor), 2120 South Jackson Street, Seattle, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

- **Sedro Woolley**, Monday, March 11
  - Three Rivers Inn Restaurant, 221 Central (on Hwy 20), Sedro Woolley, 5:00–8:00 p.m.

- **Ellensburg**, Wednesday, March 13
  - Central Washington University, Black Hall, 400 E. 8th Avenue, Ellensburg, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

- **Port Angeles**, Tuesday, March 19
  - Peninsula College, Lecture Hall, 1502 E. Lauridsen Blvd., Port Angeles, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

- **Longview/Kelso**, Wednesday, March 20
  - Lower Columbia College, Conference Rooms B&C, Student Center, 1600 Maple, Longview, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

- **Olympia/Lacey**, Thursday, March 21
  - Lacey Community Center, Banquet Room C, 6729 Pacific Avenue SE, Lacey, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Hearing Held on Substitute Senate Bill 6660
The House State Government Committee held a public hearing on SSB 6660 February 25. The bill is intended to protect personal information about law enforcement officers and their families. Dianne Dorey, Lewis County Assessor, and Suzanne Sinclair, Island County Auditor, testified as WACO representatives opposing the bill. Both gave testimony as to the administrative problems the bill would present. They indicated the bill failed to define “law enforcement officer” or “the officer’s family”. They discussed the problems with officers working in one county and living in another, and asked if the bill intended to include only the officer’s primary residence, or if included vacation and investment property as well. The Committee soon realized the bill had problems. Diane Dorey said the bill was like putting your finger in a dike with 14,000 other holes. She said that you could go to Yahoo and find her information online now, without a trip to the Assessor’s Office. One of the Committee members did that during the hearing, and the Chair indicated Diane was correct—they had accessed the information online. The issue was characterized as a much bigger problem of the right to privacy vs. the public right to know. The Committee was also given copies of correspondence between Scott Noble, King County Assessor, and Representative Hans Dunshee, with the resulting Attorney General Opinion on the applicability of the public disclosure law to computer databases of real property tax assessment records. Roland Thompson, Executive Director of Allied Newspapers, gave testimony in opposition to the bill.

The Police Guild testified in favor of the proposed Legislation. They testified the bill had only been intended to include employment files. Lynn Dilano, Assistant Deputy Director of the Department of Corrections, offered an amendment to include corrections officers in the bill language. Doug Levy signed up in favor of the bill, but did not wish to testify. Aaron Reynolds, Seattle Police Officer, testified that if law enforcement officers want to live in the real world, there is really no way to protect information.
Upcoming Events and Training

International Association of Coronerers and Medical Examiners
The International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners will be meeting in Seattle this year for the Criminal Justice Training Commission’s Spring training with the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners. The dates are June 10 - 13, at the WestCoast Grand Hotel.

Register Now For WSAC Spring District Meetings
Registrations were sent this week for the WSAC Spring District meetings. Be sure to register soon for a great hotel room and to take advantage of WSAC early registration rates.

Both meetings will begin with a wrap-up of the legislative activity (hopefully the Legislature will have adjourned) and with a roundtable discussion of county budgets in the legislative aftermath.

The Western District meeting will be held at Rosario Resort in San Juan County on April 11 and 12 and will include a field trip to an affordable housing project on Orcas Island—one of our state’s costliest addresses. The meeting will also include in-depth presentations on stormwater management developments, how counties protect riparian habitat, and recent salmon and watershed restoration activity.

The Eastern District meeting, to be held on April 25 and 26 at Sun Mountain Lodge in Okanogan County, will include an expert presentation on the Columbia River Watershed by Dr. Dan Ogden and a briefing on the removal of the Condit Dam in Klickitat County.

At the business meeting for each district, the membership will select a site for the 2002 fall meeting and the 2003 spring meeting. If your county is interested in hosting a district meeting, you will need to provide the following: a hotel with about 75 guest rooms, one meeting room large enough for 100 people, and one meeting room to hold 35 people. Please notify Kim Zydek, Association staff, for more information.

Courthouse Ramblings

Zirkle Appointed Prosecuting Attorney in Yakima County
Yakima County Commissioners have appointed Ron Zirkle as prosecuting attorney. Zirkle has been acting prosecutor since Jeff Sullivan left office January 31. Zirkle has been in the prosecutor’s office for 21 years, most recently as chief civil deputy.

Calendar of Events

March 1-5
NACo Legislative Conference, Washington Hilton & Towers Hotel, Washington, DC

March 14
WCIF/WCIP Boards/Insurance Advisory Committee, (All Day Meeting), SeaTac

March 14
Urban County Caucus Meeting, 6:30 pm, Olympia

March 15
WSAC Board of Directors meeting, Washington Counties Building, Olympia

March 15
WSAC Legislative Steering Committee, Washington Counties Building, Olympia

March 20-22
ACHS, Tacoma, Pierce County

March 21
Puget Sound Regional Council, General Assemble Meeting, 3:30 - 8:00 p.m., Bell Harbor International Conference Center, 2211 Alaskan Way, Seattle

March 21
WA Counties Risk Pool Meeting

April 4
Retro Pool Meeting, Best Inn/RV Park, Ellensburg

April 7-13
National County Government Week

April 11-12
WSAC Western District Meeting, Rosario Resort, San Juan County

April 23-26
Washington State Association of County Clerks’ & Superior Court Administrators’ Joint Conference, Ridpath Hotel, Spokane

April 25-26
WSAC Eastern District Meeting, Sun Mountain Lodge, Winthrop

April 24-26
Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ (WAPA) Annual Spring Training Program, Icicle Inn, Leavenworth

May 6-10
Washington State Association of County Auditors’ Annual Conference, Red Lion, Port Angeles

May 22-24
WIR, Yellowstone County, Billings MT

May 15-17
ACHS, Spokane

May 20-23
Washington State Association of Sheriffs’ & Police Chiefs’ (WASPC) Spring Conference, WestCoast Wenatchee Cen-

(Continued on page 9)
(Continued from page 8)

Calendar of Events

June 10-14
International Association of Coroners’ & Medical Examiners’ Annual Conference, WestCoast Grand Hotel, Seattle

June 16-19
Government Finance Officers’ Association (GFOA) Annual Conference, Denver, Colorado

June 17
WSALPHO Meeting in conjunction with WSAC Summer Convention, Bellevue

June 18
WCIF Board in conjunction with WSAC Summer Conference, 10:00 a.m. – noon, Bellevue

June 17-20
Washington State Association of County Assessors’ Annual Conference, Rosario Resort, Orcas Island

June 18-21
WSAC Summer Convention, Bellevue Inn and Bellevue Hilton, Bellevue

June 18-21
Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Annual Conference, Yakima

June 19-21
Washington State Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ (WAPA) Summer Training Program, Campbell’s Lodge, Chelan

June 22-26
National Sheriffs’ Association Annual Conference, Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 24-28
Washington State Association of County Clerks’ Annual Conference, Best Western Suites, Walla Walla

June 24-28
Washington State Association of County Treasurers’ Annual Conference, Lake- way Inn, Bellingham

July 12-16
NACo Annual Conference, New Orleans Parish, New Orleans, LA

July 17-19
ACHS, Clark County

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

Financial Management:
Understanding County Government Financing
Date: June 18
Location: Bellevue
Cost: $120.00
CPO Credits: 4 (Core Course)
An additional Elective Course will also be offered at the Summer Convention, topic TBD

Washington Counties Risk Pool – Leadership Skills in Response to Current Issues
Date: July 24
Location: Spokane
Cost: Free to Risk Pool Members $50.00 non-members
CPO Credits: 4 (Elective Course)

Newly Elected Officials Training - Understanding Your New Job at the Courthouse
Date: December 10-13
Location: Olympia
Cost: TBD
CPO Credits: All newly elected officials must attend to become certified.

Personnel/Human Resources - Understand the Laws; Maximize Your Personnel System
Date: October 1
Location: Wenatchee
Cost: $120.00
CPO Credits: 4 (Core Course)

The Class-Act County Government Official – Building Courthouse Partnerships
Date: October 2
Location: Wenatchee
Cost: TBD
CPO Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

The Class-Act County Government Official - Building Courthouse Partnerships
Date: October 2
Location: Wenatchee
Cost: TBD
CPO Credits: 2 (Elective Course)

Public Meetings, Public Information and More: Do You Know the Rules?
Dates: May 1, Ellensburg
May 2, Davenport
May 3, Richland
May 8, Mt Vernon
May 9, Tacoma
May 10, Kelso
Cost: $50.00
CPO Credits: 2 (Elective Course)
(Watch for registration information in mid-March)

The first 2002 Certified Public Official (CPO) course was conducted on January 31, with 66 county officials in attendance. The following outlines the 2002 calendar for the remainder of the year. Additional elective courses may be offered as requested by the partners, advisory committee, and members of the Associations as specific topics are identified.

WSU Sponsored, Two-Day Course Decision-Making in the Workplace
Dates: March 18, 19
Location: Puyallup
Cost: $120.00
CPO Credits: 4 (Elective Course)
Contact: Lassie Tompkins, WSU Pierce County (email tompkins@wsu.edu)

2002 CPO Course Schedule
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PORT OF EDMONDS, WA.
The Port of Edmonds is accepting applications for the position of Executive Director. The Port of Edmonds is a municipal corporation with the Executive Director reporting to an elected board of five commissioners. The Port activities include a 1,200 slip marina and rental properties with gross operating revenues of approximately four million dollars and a staff of 24 employees. The Executive Director is responsible for all aspects of operations, budgeting, capital improvements including construction management, and maintenance. This position requires handling multiple priorities and dealing with multiple constituencies of the Port district. The Executive Director must have the ability to communicate effectively with several audiences, including elected officials and the public, and take the initiative in making decisions and assuming responsibility for recommendations and actions that will have long-range impacts on the finances and operations of the Port.

Successful applicants will have significant experience in upper level management and will be able to demonstrate competency in the requirements listed above. Minimum requirements for the position require a college degree and five years of management experience. The candidate must possess excellent verbal and written communication skills, demonstrated leadership abilities, and fiscal management capabilities including knowledge of public financing. We offer a competitive salary and benefits package. The deadline for applications is March 15th, 2002. Submit resume in confidence to: Port of Edmonds, C/O Tramer Smith & Co., CPA’s, 110 James St., Suite 106, Edmonds, WA 98020.

911 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, Spokane, WA. Plan, develop, organize and direct all aspects of the Spokane County 911/Crime Check Call Center: ensure compliance with applicable federal/state regulations; budget preparation and management; administer all staffing and personnel functions; provide information and reports to the E-911 Board, as well as to County, State and Federal agencies/officials; act as the liaison with all involved jurisdictions as well as the public. Requires a Bachelor's degree with major course work in criminal justice, business management, public administration, communications or related AND five (5) years of progressively responsible experience in a senior management or administrative capacity, including experience with collective bargaining units; OR an equivalent combination of education and experience. Salary range: $6,056 including full benefits. This position requires handling multiple priorities and dealing with multiple constituencies of the Port district. Experience and education which are relevant to the position are necessary. A Bachelor's degree in related field is preferred. The Sr. Budget Analyst requires six years of progressively responsible experience in accounting including three 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 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. Application period closes 3/4/02. Contact Whatcom County Human Resources at (360) 738-4550; www.whatcomcounty.org; Equal Opportunity Employer.

MANAGEMENT, BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE. Executive Director at rural Community MH & CD Outpatient Center in northeast Washington State. Prefer Masters in social/behavioral sciences with 3 yrs. management experience or Bachelors in related field with 5 years experience in behavioral healthcare management. 2 offices, 57 staff, $3.3 million annual budget; County pop. 40K; Salary $52-558.6K DOE + benefits. Stevens County Counseling, Colville, WA, 1-866-708-4597 (WA. toll free) or (509) 684-4597, Fax (509) 684-5226, e-mail: ghankins@co.stevens.wa.us; area info. at www.colville.com or www.co.stevens.wa.us, deadline 3/31/02; position open 7/1/02

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, quantitative and qualitative research and analysis, and fiscal management. Senior Budget Analyst level leads and balances team and individual responsibilities and functions more independently. Hiring range for the Budget Analyst is $3,342- $6,111/mo. DOQ, and for the Sr. Budget Analyst is $3,635-$3,928/mo. DOQ. 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. Application period closes 3/4/02. Application period closes 3/4/02. 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.

COWLITZ COUNTY DIRECTOR OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, salary: $6,056 including full benefits. This position directs and oversees the planning and administrative functions of the Health and Human Services departments pertaining to mental health, substance abuse, developmental disabilities programs, public health policy development, surveillance and compliance enforcement efforts. It supervises managers and other staff to carry the goals and objectives of each department and ensures the efficient administration of each department. It requires, develops and implements services and strategies to ensure compliance with laws, regulations and contractual obligations, and fosters constructive partnerships to achieve effective planning and implementation of each department’s goals, strategies and programs. Requirements: Bachelor’s degree in Social Science, Public Health, Public Administration, or a related field; a master’s degree is desired. 7 years of experience in human services and/or public health administration, which must include budget administration, developing and managing human services and/or public health services, public speaking, grant writing, and administration, and full supervisory responsibilities. Or, a combination of education, experience, and skills that would ensure the successful performance of the duties of this position. Possess, develop and maintain a comprehensive knowledge of the laws, regulations and program trends pertaining to human services and public health. Possess and maintain a valid driver’s license. Application Information: The application, job announcement and job description can be obtained by visiting Administrative Services at 207 Fourth Ave. North, Kelso, WA; by calling (360) 57-3065 or TDD (360) 577-3061; by faxing your request to (360) 423-9987; or by sending an email through the link in our website: www.co.cowlitz.wa.us. The application and job announcement can be downloaded from our website. Applications must be returned to Administrative Services by March 25, 2002. EOE

KITSAP COUNTY, BUDGET ANALYST II - Plans, organizes and coordinates budget development and financial management process. Requires a bachelor's degree in business or public administration, accounting or closely related field, and four years of progressively responsible experience in government financial administration and fiscal management with a background in grants and project administration; or any combination of experience and education which provides the applicant with the desired skills, knowledge and ability required to perform the work. Experience with governmental data processing systems (Continued on page 11)
Employment Opportunities

(Continued from page 10)

required. MBA, MPA, or CPA is desirable. SALARY: $41,308 - $52,707. CLOSES: March 8, 2002. Please call (360)337-7185 for an application packet or download from our website at www.kitsapgov.com.

HUMAN RESOURCES PROGRAM COORDINATOR, YAKIMA COUNTY – Salary Range: $36,404 - $52,185 annually. Hiring Range: $36,404 - $37,530 DOQ. Requirements: Equivalent to a Bachelor’s Degree in Human Resources, Business, Criminal Justice, Social Science or a related field and three years of human resource experience. Duties: Serves as a human resources generalist and coordinates personnel workflow between the Department of Corrections and the central Human Resources Office. Uses professional discretion in applying policies and procedures. Will be a key team member in staffing an expanded corrections program. Applications and Supplemental must be received by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, March 7, 2002. Apply to Yakima County Human Resources Department, 128 N. 2nd Street, Room 412, Yakima, WA 98901, telephone (509) 574-2220. Internet: www.co.yakima.wa.us, email: human.resources@co.yakima.wa.us.

PERSONNEL OPERATIONS MANAGER, DNR. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking a human resource professional with strong leadership and team-building skills to manage our Personnel Operations and Recruitment section of the Employee Services Division (ESD). The incumbent for this position will be the first leader of a newly formed HR operations team. This position will be responsible for the administration of a comprehensive personnel program that supports the mission of the agency. As a manager in the department, this position will play a role in protecting natural resources entrusted to our care; generating income for trust beneficiaries; and striking a balance among complex and often competing public interests. SALARY: Up to $61,464 annual salary, plus full benefits package. CLOSING DATE: Open until filled. Initial screening will begin March 18, 2002. Top candidates will be scheduled for interviews the last week in March. LOCATION: Olympia, Washington RESPONSIBILITIES: Under the direction of the Employee Services Division Manager, this position plays a key role in helping the agency achieve its mission and goals through effective management of its human resources. The Personnel Operations Manager will lead a team of nine professional and paraprofessional human resource consultants and will be responsible for the following:

- Managing a team of nine in providing personnel operations services to the agency;
- Multiple programs and activities will include: Personnel and position actions; Recruitment and selection; Performance Evaluations; Public disclosure of personnel records and documents; Employee Investigations; Agency compliance with state and federal law, Merit System Rules, agency policy, and collective bargaining agreements
- Assisting with the development, implementation, and strategic management of human resource initiatives within the agency;
- Ensuring consistent, high quality services and consultations provided by Personnel Operations staff to managers, employees, and stakeholders;
- Advising managers at all levels within the agency on complex issues affecting human resources;
- Representing the agency at the Personnel Appeals Board and the Department of Employment Security;
- Implementing new personnel programs as appropriate;
- Assisting with the development of the division biennial budget ($2.5 million).

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS: The successful candidate will have:

- A bachelor’s degree;
- PHR or SPHR certification preferred;
- Strong leadership, supervisory, and team-building skills;
- Strong labor management skills, including negotiation and administration of grievances;
- Effective oral and written communication and facilitation skills;
- A strong customer focus;
- A level of competency in employment law, performance management, recruitment and retention, and affirmative action.

APPLICATION PROCESS: EMAIL submittals are preferred, but will accept hard copies.

1. Letter of interest describing your qualifications as they relate to the responsibilities and qualifications for this position.
2. A current resume.

References will be requested at the time of interview. Submit all materials to: jody.houser@wadnr.gov

Or Jody Houser, Department of Natural Resources, 1111 Washington St SE 3rd Floor, PO Box 47033, Olympia WA 98504-7033.

For more information contact Debra Carlson at (360) 902-1228, debra.carlson@wadnr.gov or Jody at (360) 902-1134, jody.houser@wadnr.gov. For more DNR job opportunities.

WHATCOM COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT – Drug Court, Substance Abuse Specialist II (Chemical Dependency). The Drug Court Program in Bellingham, WA, is seeking an energetic individual to work collaboratively in a challenging position within the growing adult drug court movement. Hiring range is $17.46 - $18.84/hour, DOQ. (Top salary: $22.77/hr.) Requires a BA in Human Services, Psychology, Sociology, or related field, current CDP status, and 4 yrs. recent experience providing chemical dependency assessments, treatment/discharge planning, group & case management skills. MSW/MA and experience with co-occurring disorders preferred. Whatcom County offers excellent employer-paid medical, dental & vision benefits for employee and family, generous vacation, sick & holiday leave. WA State Retirement system. Optional deferred comp & Flex 125 available. Application period closes 3/19/02. 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.
Jefferson County sued by ACLU over jail conditions

Tuesday, February 26, 2002
By SAM SKOLNIK
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit yesterday against Jefferson County officials, claiming that some of the conditions at the county jail in Port Hadlock are "so far below acceptable standards as to constitute cruel and unusual punishment."

Among other things, the ACLU's 12-page complaint says health care staff are not available to inmates when needed; jailers' routine disallowance of psychiatric medication to inmates has caused seizures and panic attacks; and inmates are denied basic shelter necessities such as running water and working showers and toilets.

"Jails aren't supposed to be comfortable," said Doug Honig, spokesman for the ACLU of Washington. "But they have to have basic levels of humane treatment."

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, asks the court to order the jail to remedy the conditions immediately. Although it was filed on behalf of one inmate, Shawn Orndorff, the ACLU hopes to certify the suit as a class action on behalf of all current and future inmates.

The complaint was filed against the county, as well as Jefferson County Sheriff Peter Piccini; Carla Schuck, the county's superintendent of corrections; and Steve Richmond, the senior sergeant and highest-ranking correctional officer at the jail. Schuck declined comment. Piccini and Richmond could not be reached.

The ACLU claims that the jail, where defendants spend time before they are either released or sent to state prison after conviction, is overcrowded, too. It houses anywhere from 40 to more than 60 inmates at any given time, although it was built to house about 30.

Orndorff, who has been in the jail for about two months, according to the complaint, was allowed only a "single thin blanket ... insufficient to provide warmth" at night, and was forced to create makeshift hot-water bottles from shampoo containers to stay warm.

Orndorff also was allegedly denied prescription medication for depression and sleep disorders despite repeated requests, according to the suit -- and then, after they reversed their position and allowed him some medication, the jailers placed him in solitary confinement for 10 days for possessing contraband, even though he was just holding on to the pills so he could take them at the correct daily times.

Honig said that in the past decade the ACLU successfully has pursued litigation on similar grounds against the King County Jail, the Pierce County Jail and the Women's Correctional Center near Gig Harbor.

Legislature must put a stop to unfunded Mandates

March 2002
Washington State Grange News

Your future prosperity, health and safety are in trouble. Why? No, it's not terrorists or meth labs. It's a legislature that continues to push the state's financial woes onto the shoulders of the counties.

Here's the facts: The state has said it needs to cut about $1.2 billion and it is expected when all is said and done another $300 million dollars on top of that out of its budget. The state is required constitutionally to provide for K-12 education, and when you add higher education that adds up to about 60 percent of the total state budget. Another 5 to 10 percent goes toward repaying debt. All in all, the billion dollars is going to have to come out of about 5 to 10 percent of the total state budget.

And that sliver takes in funding given to counties.

Did you know counties are required by law to provide for public health and safety of those who live within their borders? They are required to provide police, fire, jails, judges, elections, just about everything that makes your community as safe as it can be. After all, when there is any kind of disaster, who are the first on the scene? Local cops, firefighters, paramedics. When New York City was attacked, it was not the Armed Forces, but local law enforcement that was first on the scene.

And that costs money. Lots of it. Where does it come from? For the most part, it comes from you. Property taxes. Local sales taxes. It's that money that goes toward keeping you safe and secure. Money well spent, I'd say. Unfortunately, counties get only about 20 percent of your property tax dollars, cities get upwards of 30 percent, and the rest goes to the state.

Let's look at Garfield County, for example. The Garfield County treasurer's budget is based on the employment of two people in a county office, plus another $1,200 or so for administrative and material costs. A small county like Garfield, with a very small tax base, relies on state money for about a third or more of its total budget. Take that state money away, and what happens? Somebody gets fired. Staff goes from two to one. Things don't get done.

And yet the legislature continues to place a bigger and bigger burden on counties by proposing legislation that will require action by counties while not providing any funding, or nowhere near enough to cover the costs. As of Feb. 4, the Washington State Association of Counties had a list of 47 bills - that's right, 47 - that would place a significant financial burden on counties and that do not provide for any significant funding.

So, to get this straight, the state is proposing cutting funding to counties. Then, on top of that, they're creating legislation that makes counties provide even more services than they already do now, while not helping out with the cost of these projects. What's that lead to? Cutbacks. And when it comes to counties, those cutbacks come in the form of fewer law officers, emergency workers, judges and jail beds, which all adds up to a less secure environment for you and your family.
We understand these are trying times for the state. Unemployment is sky high. Money is just not out there right now. But we must make sure our legislators are keeping things in perspective. We must let them know the answer is not crippling much-needed services in our counties, while at the same time requiring already-strapped counties to do even more, with less and less money.

What can you do? Talk to your county commissioners. Ask them what you can do to help. Your first question should be, What have I got to lose? Literally, that’s what we’re talking about. If your county’s budget is slashed as has been proposed, what is it going to mean to you as an individual? Once you hear what the personal impact is going to be, it is time to get on the horn and give your legislators in Olympia an earful. Make sure they know you are not willing to give up your security and safety just because the legislature continues to push the work the state doesn’t want to do or pay for on your county.

Talk to your cities too. There are 180 cities right now that rely on state money for at least 10 percent of their budget, and there are 50 cities that rely on that money for over a third of their budget. Take it away, and what happens? Cities go broke. Edgewood in Pierce County is already there. What do cities do when they go broke? They turn themselves over to the county, which is then faced with the burden of supplying, by law, the services the city can no longer provide.

You must call your legislators and demand that unfunded mandates are not acceptable. If the state has mismanaged itself to the point they just want to push off the work to the counties, simply taking the burden off the state and placing it on already-strapped counties is not the answer. Your health, your safety and your security are at stake. Get involved. Talk to your county officials and find out what they need. And tell your senators and representatives in Olympia loud and clear that you do not want to see one single piece of legislation that doesn’t provide full funding from the state to make it a reality.

Do it now. Session’s running short. You can contact your legislators by calling the Legislative Hotline at 800-562-6000.

**OUR VIEWS:**

**Provide funds to treat the mentally ill**

Gov. Gary Locke's proposed budget cuts to mental health programs could have dire consequences in South Sound.

The governor is proposing a 3 percent across-the-board cut, which translates into an $890,727 cut in Thurston and Mason county community mental health treatment programs.

John Masterson, chief executive officer of Behavioral Health Resources, said the loss of state and federal funds would mean 225 fewer South Sound residents would receive the basic mental counseling and medical services they need.

If the state Legislature goes along with the cuts, mental health providers would have to turn people away -- at the same time the state is shifting more mentally ill patients out of state mental hospitals and placing them in community-based programs.

Masterson said those mentally ill men, women and children who are less ill simply won't have publicly financed treatment options available to them. Or low-income individuals who currently qualify for mental health services will no longer be eligible because the income thresholds will be raised.

**Ripple effects**

The bottom line: This community will be less secure and taxpayers simply will pay in other ways.

Hospital emergency room physicians and nurses will deal with more mentally ill individuals in crisis.

Law enforcement officers are going to deal with more mentally ill offenders because they haven't gotten the treatment or medications to keep their illnesses in check.

Crimes will be committed and jails will fill with the mentally ill.

Children with behavior disorders -- perhaps fostered by physical or sexual abuse -- will act out in class, disrupting the education of their classmates.

The ripple effects are endless and will most likely cause a shift in expenditures, not a reduction.

**Look elsewhere**

The governor's budget proposal is terribly shortsighted in that regard.

Lawmakers simply must look to other areas for budget cuts.

One place to start looking is in the administrative overhead costs of the state's mental health delivery system.

Longtime state residents have seen the swings of the mental health pendulum.

For a period of time, the state treats the mentally ill in state institutions. Concerns about the quality of care arise and suddenly the state shifts directions and focuses on community-based mental health treatment programs.

**Caught in the middle**

Then a high-profile case or two sparks public outrage and the pendulum swings back toward institutionalization.

Back and forth it goes, and those providing services are caught in the middle. When treatment providers see fewer clients, doctors and psychiatrists are blamed. The blame rightfully belongs with those who set state and federal budgets for treatment of the mentally ill.

The pendulum today is swinging in favor of community-based treatment. State budget writers are shrinking the size of the state mental health hospitals and putting those patients -- some of whom have been in state treatment for years -- into communities where it's less costly to treat them.

Surely additional dollars can be saved at the state level and funneled to the 14 residential support networks scattered around the state. Those networks contract with nonprofit organizations to provide community-based treatment programs.

**Invest wisely**

Taxpayers are going to pay one way or another to treat the mentally ill -- either in direct service to those in need or by hiring more police officers, more judges, more prosecutors and building bigger jails. Or by being asked for contributions by nonprofit organizations that help shelter and feed the homeless, many of whom have mental illness.

Surely, for the sake of compassion for the mentally ill and for the sake of community safety, it makes more sense to invest dollars in treatment.