

From: [Cohn, Gary](#)
To: [EPS.Maillist](#)
Subject: The Mother of All Legislative Sessions?
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Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Dear Colleagues:

Our state legislature convened yesterday. *The Olympian's* January 7 editorial headline, "[The mother of all legislative battles](#)," probably sums up what we expect to be the most challenging and historic legislative session we've experienced as educators. Governor Inslee has developed what I view as a courageous proposal to *finally* [amplify](#) and [equitably](#) fund basic education; a proposal to comply with the State Supreme Court's [decision](#) in McCleary vs. State. It addresses the Court's subsequent orders to tackle the state's "consistent, underfunding of the actual cost of recruiting, retaining, and compensating competent teachers, administrators, and staff."

The [governor's budget proposal](#) takes a creative approach to providing realistic revenue options that help meet the needs of students, addresses market realities of teacher shortages, responds to ongoing staff training needs, and sets us on a path to a sorely needed early learning investment that will help provide an equitable playing field for children at the start of kindergarten. The governor's budget would provide resources to support struggling learners and help to close the achievement gap, while expanding programs to equip students with the 21st century skills needed to graduate career and college ready. The governor also recognizes the importance of hiring, supporting and retaining quality educators by providing much needed time and resources for staff training and mentorship programs to support effective instruction. And, it helps address the teacher shortage districts across the state are experiencing by proposing to pay competitive salaries. I encourage you to read what [WSSDA](#), [WASA](#), and [WEA](#) are saying about the budget proposal.

The governor's plan creates a benchmark for ample funding within a shorter timeframe than previous proposals, setting the bar high for this legislative session. It aggressively aims to accomplish this work in just two years—four years ahead of other proposals—with revenue sources that do not take away from other state services that support students and families. The plan includes scaling back local levies to offset higher state funding, and leveling the levy playing field for all school districts. We await greater clarity regarding the timing and details of that proposed transition.

In my view, the governor deserves to be commended for calling a halt to the partisan game of "kick the can" down the road. For every year that state legislators fail to resolve this problem, our students lose. You and I know now is the time to take the steps necessary to amplify fund our schools and help each student succeed. I encourage you to pay close attention to the developments in our Washington Legislature this year.

Best regards,

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