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Senate Republican Caucus Chair

Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;
Ways and Means; Rules

March 20, 2009

Dear Friends,

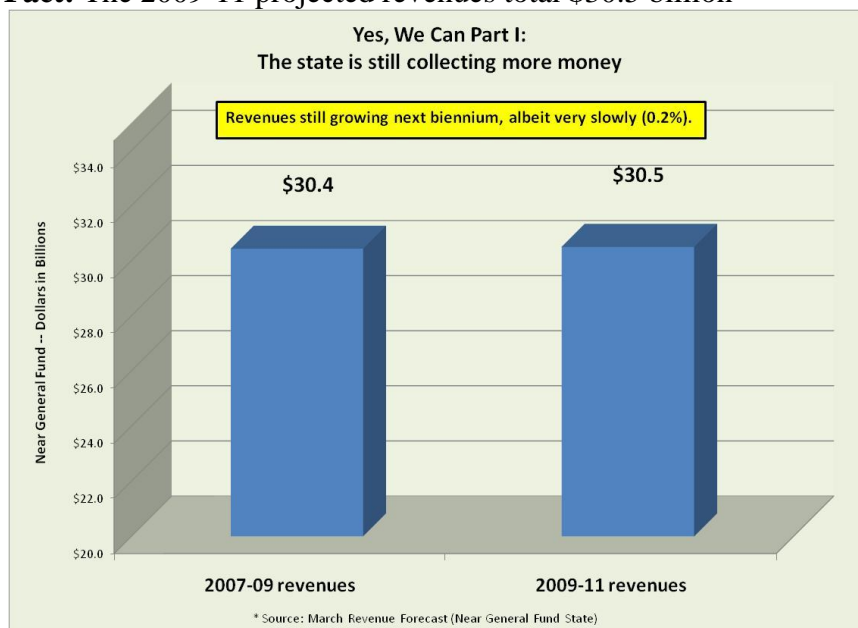
Hello again from the state Capitol. Today is the 68th day of our 105-day legislative session. The Legislature is now in the second half of the session. March 12 was the last day the House and Senate could consider their own bills, except those related to the operating, capital and transportation budgets. At the March 12 deadline the Senate had passed 359 bills and the House had passed 434 bills. The Senate and House now have until March 30 to move each other's bills out of committee – except fiscal committees, which have until April 6.

State Budget – Just the Facts

On Thursday the [Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council](#) released a new quarterly state revenue forecast that showed revenues were down by an additional \$647 million. This means projected revenues for the 2009-11 biennium are \$30.5 billion. Many people are projecting the state to be facing an \$8.9 billion deficit, but what does all of this really mean?

Fact: The 2007-09 revenues totaled \$30.4 billion

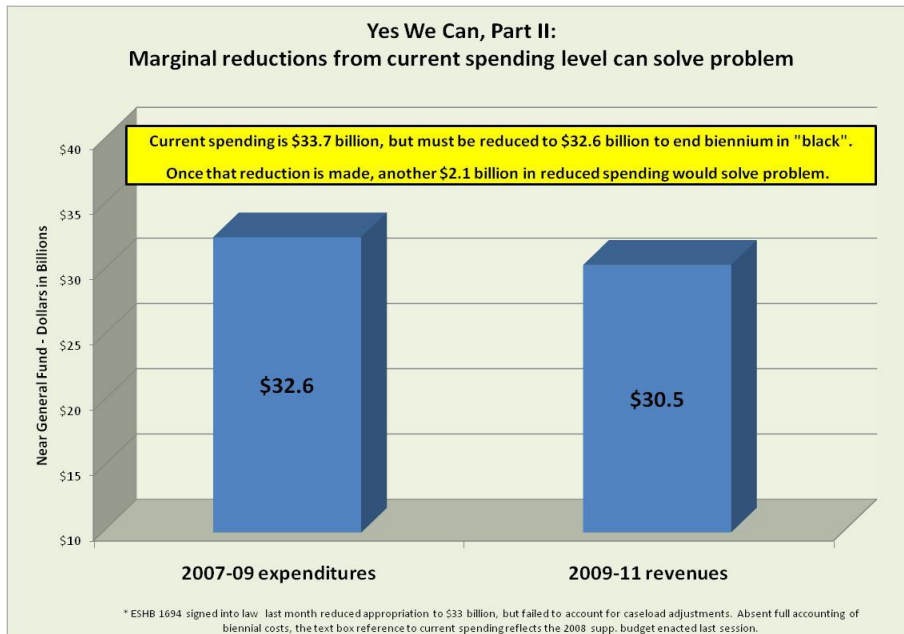
Fact: The 2009-11 projected revenues total \$30.5 billion



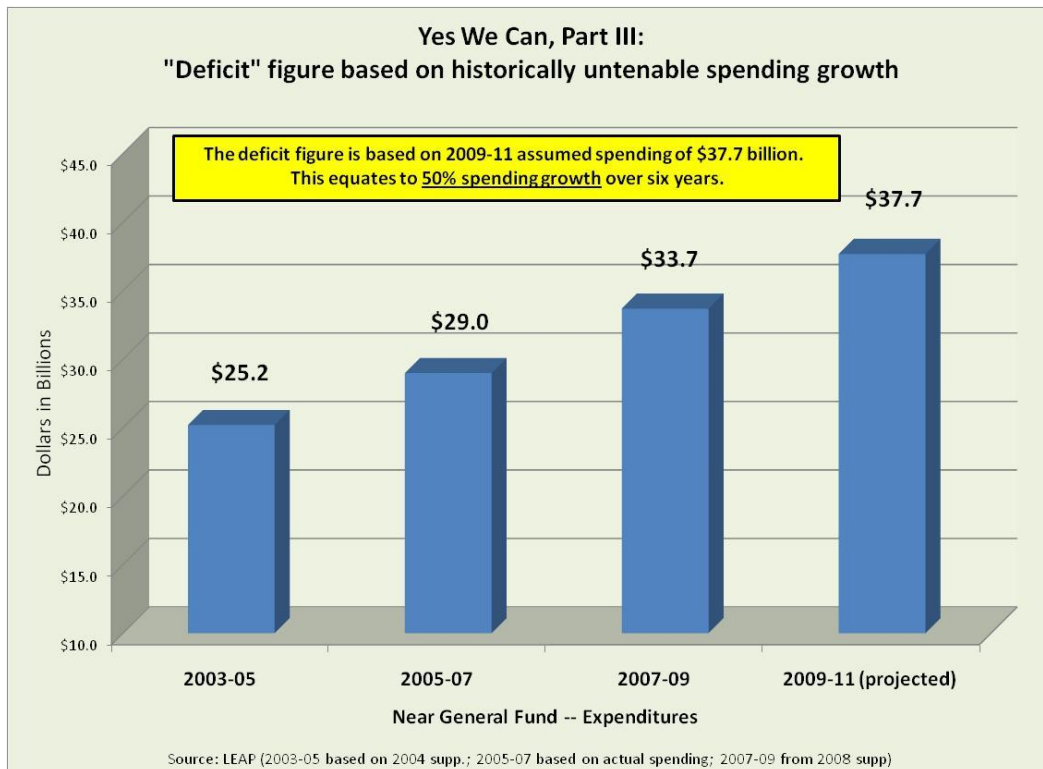
Fact: The 2007-09 expenditures totaled \$33.7 billion, out pacing revenue by **\$ 3.3 billion**

Fact: The Legislature passed ESHB 1194, reducing 07-09 expenditures by \$600 million

Fact: The Legislature needs to further reduce the 07-09 budget by \$500 million to \$32.6 billion in order to end the biennium in “black”. (This utilizes \$2 billion in reserves not including the “rainy day fund.”)



If the state continues with the same spending behavior, the 2009-11 projected budget would be \$37.7 billion. This equates to 50 percent spending growth over six years.



The nearly \$9 billion deficit figure includes not only things we *must* do, but also many new programs that have been added over the past four years. In the coming weeks the majority party will be releasing a budget that expresses their priorities. The rumor in Olympia is a tax proposal will be sent to the voters to sustain current spending and balance the 2009-11 budget. I still believe we can balance the state budget [without raising taxes](#). I will share more about this in the weeks to come. I welcome your thoughts.

Legislation update

Several of the bills I sponsored were the subject of House hearings this week.

- **Disclosing vehicle damage.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5388](#) would require auto dealers to disclose damage when selling a car, including to another dealer. SSB 5388 was the subject of a hearing on March 13 and passed out the House Committee on Commerce and Labor on March 20.
- **Property tax annual valuations.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5368](#) would require annual revaluations of property for tax purposes, which would help eliminate huge spikes in property tax assessments and property tax bills. The bill had a hearing in the House Finance Committee on Tuesday, March 17.
- **Bill to aid young drivers.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5469](#) would ensure, for drivers with an intermediate driver's license, that being in an accident would no longer be grounds for denying the lifting of the license restrictions if there is another party to the accident and the other party was cited in connection with the accident. SSB 5469 was the subject of a hearing in the House Transportation Committee on March 16.

Transportation news

On March 5 Gov. Gregoire signed the 2009 supplemental state transportation budget that includes a number of projects funded by federal stimulus dollars. The list includes some specific projects in and around the 12th Legislative district, including a \$1.06 million paving project on SR 155 from Omak east to five miles below the Disautel Pass summit (between the 7th and 12th legislative districts). This job is being advertised for private contractor bids on April 6.

In addition, there is a "second tier" project that could be funded should any first-tier projects prove unready to build. This project would consist of adding a half-mile long passing lane on U.S. 97 south of Chelan Falls between Wiemer Road and Brays Road, half way between Orondo and the Beebe Bridge.

Bill relating to public transportation on Lake Chelan

Lake Chelan is one of Washington's biggest treasures. As someone who was born and raised in Chelan I know it's also part of the fabric of our lives in North Central Washington. Over the past year there has been discussion about the future of public transportation on Lake Chelan. Last summer I hosted a meeting of those involved with this issue to talk about where to go next. This year I co-sponsored [Substitute Senate Bill 5894](#), a measure that includes authorization for the state Utilities and Transportation Commission to study the issue of public transportation on Lake Chelan. The bill will be the subject of a hearing in the House Transportation Committee on Tuesday, March 24.

Felon voting rights

A bill that would allow the restoration of voting rights for convicted felons before restitution is made to their victims passed the House of Representatives on March 10 on a vote of 53-43. The measure, [House Bill 1517](#), is now in the Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee for consideration. The bill would require felons to reregister to vote upon release from prison and community supervision. The Senate measure, [Senate Bill 5534](#), was not brought up for a full Senate vote and died at the cutoff for the Senate to consider its own bills.

Young hunters

Prior to 1994 all hunters under age 14 were required to be accompanied by an adult when using a firearm for hunting or target practice. That requirement was inadvertently deleted when other changes were made to hunting laws. After a hiker was shot and killed accidentally last August by a 14-year-old boy hunting without supervision, the issue was raised as to whether the law should be reinstated. The debate has centered mostly on the age of a youth requiring supervision. Some support age 16 and younger. The measure approved by the House of Representatives sets the age at under 14. [Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1114](#) passed the House of Representatives on March 10 on a vote of 70-26. It is now in the Senate Natural Resources, Ocean and Recreation Committee for consideration.

Payday loans

Under state law there is no minimum term for a payday loan. The maximum term is 45 days. Loans are limited to \$700 at any one time. Interest may not exceed 15 percent on the first \$500 and 10 percent on the amount over \$500. A proposal moving through the Legislature this year would set the minimum term of a payday loan at the borrower's next paycheck unless that is less than seven days. If it is less than seven days, then the minimum term is set at the subsequent paycheck. A borrower would not be allowed to take out more than \$700 in small loans at any time from all lenders and would not be able to borrow more than 30 percent of his or her gross monthly income. In addition, a borrower with a previous loan converted to an installment plan for repayment would not be able to take out another loan. [Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1709](#) passed the House of Representatives on March 9 on a vote of 84-10. It is now before the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee for consideration.

Livestock watering

Since 1945 ranchers have been able to water their livestock, control dust and cool their animals from an exempt well with no daily gallon limit. Last November the state Department of Ecology issued a letter greatly restricting how water can be used for livestock. As a result, what ranchers always understood to be a rightful use of their water became threatened. Two bills were introduced in the House of Representatives this session related to this issue. [House Bill 1509](#) would have put into statute a definition of stock watering to include all reasonable uses normally associated with the care and management of livestock with no daily limit. [House Bill 1091](#) would have put a 5,000 gallon per day limit on water for livestock purposes. Both bills died in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. It appears this issue is headed for a study group over the interim with the hope of a resolution for the 2010 Legislature to consider.

In closing...

Thank you for your ongoing interest in the actions the Legislature is taking in Olympia. If there is anything I can do for you, or if you have questions about issues before the Legislature, please contact me. I am happy to assist however I can.

All the best,

Linda

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For information about public hearings, proposed new laws, and the progress of bills you are interested in, please visit the Legislature's Information Web site at www.leg.wa.gov.