Civic Engagement and the State Budget
Adapted by Allison Feher, President, from LWVWA materials

Last May at our state convention, the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) adopted the Civic Engagement Project (CEP) as the primary focus for the next biennium. A major purpose of the project is to prepare Washingtonians to take action for budget and tax reform by engaging the public in an evaluation of Washington’s budget and tax structure and an exploration of the programs/services provided by state and local government, thus challenging the “anti-tax,” “anti-government” mindset and generating understanding of the need for change. For Washington State, already reeling from the economic downturn, the budget may become an even more critical topic for education, discussion and advocacy after this November’s election. One of the strategies of the project is to demonstrate the connections between public policies and peoples’ lives.

So how does the state budget affect you? Here are some examples of how the 2009-2011 budget cuts will affect services in four critical areas that touch almost all of us: Education, Health Care, Transportation, and Children’s Issues.

Cuts to education will mean larger class sizes, no more after-school programs, fewer nutritional meals made possible through the Local Farms and Healthy Kids Program, fewer sports teams, and no paraprofessional training or professional development for teachers.

In the area of health care, the Basic Health Plan was reduced by 42%, and General Assistance Unemployable (GA-U) funding was reduced by 18%. In addition, programs for the elderly and disabled were reduced or eliminated, programs for individuals with substance abuse or mental health issues have been reduced and funding for family planning clinics was reduced by 10%.

Improving transportation is vital to our economy and our environment. More people than ever are using metro buses and commuter vans, yet sales revenues, the largest single source of funds for public transportation, have dropped substantially during the current recession. The combination of increased transit use and decreased sales tax revenues have resulted in a financial crisis for the system.

Funding for two programs that support high quality child care from birth through preschool and provide early childhood education were cut, with the result that more preschool children will enter the school system inadequately prepared to succeed. Additionally, implementation of Paid Family Leave—up to five weeks of partial wage replacement of up to $250 per week upon the birth or adoption of a child—has been delayed for at least three years.

It’s time to start a new conversation. Let’s first talk about what services are essential to our community, then look for a fair and equitable way to pay for them.

This material is an adaptation of two documents produced by the LWVWA CEP: “The Purpose of the Project” and “How the Washington State Budget Impacts You.” (www.lwvwa.org)

Don’t Forget to Vote!!!
Ballots must be postmarked by November 3rd. Area drop boxes are also available until 8pm on November 3rd.
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President’s Message

I can hardly believe it’s already almost November. By the time you read this our annual Political Party & Auction will be over (and one hopes a great success) and the election season will be in its last days.

We have done a tremendous amount this fall: hosting, moderating and assisting with more than a dozen candidate forums. We’ve sent speakers out to talk about the ballot issues, including our dedicated Civics Education committee who volunteered to go out and speak to not one but six Shorecrest High School civics classes about the current issues and the overall importance of being an informed voter. Volunteers drafted the ballot issue summaries that provided a resource for our speakers’ bureau volunteers as well as for you and our community at large. And if all that election work wasn’t enough, we have also organized an auction, an excellent forum on privatization, and a Get to Know League supper, done our usual support work for members and units, and are putting together this month’s state budget forum and materials with the help of the State League’s Civic Engagement Project committee!

So now I want to say, must say, THANK YOU. Your willingness to share your time and energy to serve our organization and the community is truly staggering. Even through the frenzied, chaotic pace that election season always seems to bring, you step up and make sure the job gets done. On average, you provide over 10,000 hours of volunteer labor in the course of the year – the dollar value of that contribution is over half a million. That is an amazing gift and I want to recognize you all for it.

Sincerely,

Allison Feher

Mission Statement
The League of Women Voters of Seattle, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters of Seattle serves the greater Seattle area, including the cities of north King County as well as east King County from Bothell to Bellevue.
### November

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<td>Election Day</td>
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#### Events
- **International Relations Committee**
  - Monday, November 2
  - 12:45-2:45 p.m.
  - League Office

- **Election Day**
  - Tuesday, November 3

- **Forum: The State Budget and the Current Economy**
  - Thursday, November 5
  - 7:30 p.m.
  - Seattle First Baptist Church

- **Board Meeting**
  - Saturday, November 7
  - League Office

- **December Voter Deadline**
  - Monday, November 9

- **Social Justice Committee**
  - Saturday, November 14
  - 10:00 a.m.
  - League Office

- **Transportation Committee**
  - Tuesday, November 17
  - 10:00 a.m.
  - League Office

- **Civics Education Committee**
  - Thursday, November 19
  - 4:30-6:00 p.m.
  - The Pub at Vios

- **State Action Workshop, Western Washington**
  - Saturday, November 21
  - 9:00 am-2:30 p.m.
  - St. Andrews Church, Bellevue

- **Economics and Taxation Committee**
  - Saturday, November 21
  - 11:30 a.m.
  - 909 E Newton #D9

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### December

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The League of Women Voters of Seattle (LWVS) presents a public forum each month between September and May, generally on the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. With the exception of the March forum, which takes place at St. Andrews Church in Bellevue, the forums are held at Seattle First Baptist Church. The tentative schedule of upcoming forums for 2009–2010 appears to the left; check your Voter or the LWVS website, seattlelwv.org, each month for up-to-date information.

League Forums

| November 5: The State Budget and the Current Economy |
| December 3: The Legislative Agenda |
| January 7: Program Planning |
| February 4: TBA |
| March 4: Women’s Issues |
| April 1: TBA |
| May 6: TBA |

October Board Briefs By Brita Butler-Wall, Secretary

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Seattle (LWVS) met on Saturday morning, October 3. This is a brief summary of their work.

Membership: LWVS currently has 794 members. The first joint meeting of the Membership and Outreach committees will be held 10-12 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 17 at the League office. All are welcome to attend and discuss the upcoming membership campaign. Call the office if you would like to participate.

Units: 141 members and 33 guests participated in the consensus discussions of privatization. Responses are being collated and will be presented to the Board in November.

Program: The Program committee continues to recruit speakers for the November forum on the State budget. It was decided that individual members who cannot participate in consensus discussions should give their input to a unit leader before the discussion; individual opinion pieces will not otherwise be considered in compiling the consensus. Brita Butler-Wall, Maria Brusher, and Allison Feher are organizing the December forum, which will feature diverse community organizations’ legislative agendas.

Voter Service: Christal Wood, Betsy Sullivan, Mickey Horwitz, and Allison Feher attended the recent Speakers’ Bureau trainings; it was suggested these be scheduled earlier in the election cycle to encourage broader participation.

Action: The Board endorsed the Housing Levy and directed the President to send an op-ed conveying our apprehension regarding the tax structure and dissatisfaction with a funding system reliant on levies. The board had earlier endorsed the Open Space County Charter Amendment via email.

Computer network upgrades: The Board voted to purchase a laptop and docking station for the Board president’s use as part of the recent upgrades to memory and efficiency in office technology.

Outreach: Board members are scheduled to participate in Seattle Works dinner auction on Saturday, Oct. 10, the Powerful Voices luncheon on Thursday, Oct. 8, and the Real Change 50th Anniversary breakfast on Oct. 20.

Fundraising: Victoria Bennett urged Board members to participate actively in the upcoming Political Party and Auction. This year, 18 politicians plan to attend. The Board will review our fundraising strategies at the January retreat.
Committees

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**
**DATE:** Monday, November 2
**TIME:** 12:45–2:45 P.M.
**PLACE:** League Office

Anyone interested in participating is welcome—we will be talking about our work for the upcoming year. Everyone is invited to bring one article on an I-R topic which has recently caught your attention. For more information, email Ellen Berg or Peggy Saari: ellenzberg@msn.com or peggysaari@comcast.net.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE**
**DATE:** Saturday, November 14
**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
**PLACE:** League Office

The Social Justice Committee would like to extend an invitation to all League members to join us for a special meeting on Saturday, November 14th from 10 a.m. to noon at the LWV Seattle office. The Social Justice Committee has focused on issues ranging from homelessness and affordable housing, the impact of government revenue streams and policies on the provision of health and human services and how current governmental/criminal justice policies have affected decisions relating to the need to build a new city/county jail, to voting rights and marriage equity. The committee is currently working on a study to explore the effect of funding and government policies on mental health service delivery in Seattle and King County. Please join us to meet and greet new and ongoing committee members, and to work on developing the Social Justice Committee’s 2010 work plan.

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**
**DATE:** Tuesday, November 17
**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.
**PLACE:** League Office

Our subject will be “Who pays for what?” and our speakers will be Charles Howard and Matthew Kitchens from the Puget Sound Regional Council. Mr. Howard is the council’s key expert on transportation—the “what,” and Mr. Kitchens will tell us about “who pays.”

See page 8 for a summary of the transportation policy overview given by Daniel Carlson from the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs at our September meeting. The December Voter will contain a report on the talk by our October speaker, David Hull, Metro’s service planning supervisor, about the financial and service constraints Metro is coping with.

**ECONOMICS AND TAXATION COMMITTEE**
**DATE:** Saturday, November 21
**TIME:** 11:30 a.m.
**PLACE:** 909 E. Newton, #D9

Please bring a sandwich for lunch. New members are welcome, but please call Vicky Downs at (206) 329-4848 to let her know you will be coming.

**CIVICS EDUCATION COMMITTEE**
**DATES:** Thursday, November 19
**TIME:** 4:30–6:00 P.M.
**PLACE:** The Pub at Vios, 6504 20th NE

For more information, contact Dana Twight: dctrwright@u.washington.edu or (206) 329-4848.

**HEADS UP FOR GREAT DECISIONS 2010**

LWVSeattle will sponsor Great Decisions Discussion Groups again this year beginning in February. The discussions are based on the annual briefing book published by the Foreign Policy Association, which has announced the following topics (subject to change):

- Special Envoys
- Kenya and R2P (Responsibility to Protect)
- Global Crime
- U.S. - China Security Relations
- Global Financial Crisis
- Russia and its Neighbors
- The Persian Gulf Peacekeeping

Discussion groups are scheduled in Seattle, on Mercer Island and in Issaquah. If League members wish to schedule another group, they should contact Carol Goldenberg at (206) 329-4848.

Watch for more information in next month’s Voter.
Thank You!

The following businesses and organizations in Washington State have donated items for our 33rd Political Party and Auction. They could have declined to give us something, citing the economy as an excuse, and we would have understood. Instead, they proved to us that we live in a generous and caring community. We are grateful for their support and goodwill. Please patronize them to give them a return for their investment in us.

12th & Olive Wine Company, Seattle
A Better Day Salon, Lake Forest Park
Agua Verde Cafe and Paddle Club, Seattle
Arboretum Foundation, Seattle
Anna L. Bartels, Apparel Design and Textiles, Seattle
Bake's Place at Providence Point, Issaquah
Bamboo Bar and Grill, Seattle
Barbara's in the Park, Lake Forest Park
Ben Bridge Jeweler, Seattle
Bilinear Art Consulting, Seattle
Blurb.com
Bon Vivant School of Cooking, Seattle
Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Seattle
Butch Blum, Seattle
Café Dharwin, Seattle
Café Javasti, Seattle
Century Ballroom, Seattle
Richard Clark, mentor, Seattle
Curious Kidstuff, Seattle
Curves, Lake Forest Park
Dahlia Lounge, Seattle
David Coleman Architecture, Seattle
DeCharlene’s Beauty and Boutique, Seattle
Dimitriou’s Jazz Alley, Seattle
Discover Houseboating’s Jeri Callahan, Seattle
Earl’s Bar and Grill, Seattle
Early Music Guild of Seattle
Elements, Seattle
Ephesus Restaurant, Seattle
Essential Baking Company, Seattle
Flying House Productions – Seattle Women’s Chorus
Fremont Place Book Company, Seattle
Jim Gerlitz, Artist, Seattle
Henry Art Gallery, Seattle
Hoodsport Winery, Inc., Hoodsport
Illusions Hair Design, Seattle
Intiman Theatre, Seattle
Ivar’s and Kidd Valley Restaurants, Seattle
J.F. Henry Kitchen & Tableware Company, Seattle
John Howie Steak, Bellevue
Jones Glassworks, Seattle
Julia’s Restaurants, Seattle
Lake Forest Bar and Grill, Lake Forest Park
Lake Forest Park Curves, Lake Forest Park
Lake Forest Park Dinners Ready, Lake Forest Park
Lake Union Recording, Seattle
Leschi Market, Seattle
Lettuce Link, a program of Solid Ground, Seattle
Majestic Bay Theatres, Seattle
Meany Hall for the Performing Arts, Seattle
Menashe and Sons Jewelers, Seattle
Mercer Island Florist, Mercer Island
Metropolitan Markets, Seattle
Museum of Flight, Seattle
Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle
Northwest Outdoor Center, Seattle
On the Boards, Seattle
Pacific Coast Feather Company, Seattle
Pepper Couture, Seattle
Queen Mary Tea Room, Seattle
Restaurant Le Gourmand, Seattle
Rick Steves’ Europe Through the Back Door, Edmonds
Saltoro Restaurant, Seattle
Scarecrow Video, Seattle
Lisa E. Schuchman, attorney, Seattle
Seastar Restaurant and Raw Bar, Seattle
Seattle Aquarium
Seattle Art Museum
Seattle Choral Company
Seattle Fire Department
Seattle Musical Theatre
Seattle Theatre Group - The Paramount
Seattle Water Department
Sky River Winery, Inc., Sultan
Neil Slonnick, artist
Jay P. Spenser, author, Seattle
Sport Restaurant and Bar, Seattle
Style Assist by Mary-Lynn Ballew, Seattle
Suquamish Tribe, Port Madison Indian Reservation
Talbot’s, Seattle
Terjung’s Studio of Gifts, Seattle
Terrace Dining Room, Horizon House, Seattle
The Captain Whidbey Inn, Coupeville
The Center for Wooden Boats, Seattle
The Comedy Underground, Seattle
The Pike Place Market Creamery, Seattle
Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park
Vintage Selections, Seattle
Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma
Weinhard Cafe, Dayton
Weinhard Hotel, Dayton
Wolf Haven International, Tenino
Zamboanga, Seattle
Zulu Nyala Group, South Africa
HELP WANTED

Request for CIS Volunteers
Have a little extra time and want to become involved with the League? Come join us on the Citizen Information Service (CIS) desk. If you like to talk on the phone and greet people who come into the office, we have just the right spot for you. We currently need someone who would be willing to commit three hours a week in the afternoon, preferably Thursday afternoon, to answer our phones for us. We will train! Call Cynthia Howe at (206) 236-0593 or email her at howe.john@comcast.net.

GREAT CITY PRESENTATION: PROPOSED STREETCAR OPTIONS

Date: Thursday, November 12
Time: 12:00 p.m.
Place: Harbor Steps

The Great City Initiative is a nonprofit organization that provides ongoing information on city issues through a series of lunchtime meetings at GGLO headquarters off of Harbor Steps. The presentations last from 12–1:00, with discussions continuing until 1:30. Recent presentations have included neighborhood planning, planning for Yesler Terrace, and a design framework for South Lake Union. The Nov. 12 presentation will be on proposed streetcar options for First Hill and 12th Ave. More information can be obtained at www.greatcity.org.

Carlson talked about transportation planning as a series of paradigms that organized planning for each era. He described the conditions that led to the rise of each, and the way that each changed expectations. He pointed out that while the paradigms confronted new ideas in their time, they also established ways of organizing our lives which developed into unquestioned habits.

1) The first paradigm grew with the popularity of the automobile and the need for roads to drive them on. Car companies and the gas companies, wanting to maximize profit, advocated for a gas tax to fund road building, and roads were built between all kinds of places, here to there, small towns to big cities.

2) After World War II, the paradigm changed. Interstate highways were “needed” to get people in cars and products in trucks much longer distances faster. The Federal government funded 90% of the cost of the interstate system. Towns were bypassed, cities became larger hubs and suburbs grew in all directions, many even zoned entirely residential. The car became absolutely essential.

3) The current paradigm demands new thinking. These 60 years of more cars and more roads for more cars may be reaching the limit. Now there is a contest between funding for roads and investment in other kinds of transportation. The paradigm is changing from car/road to people/services/needs as the priority, recognizing the fact that people walk, ride bikes, and either cannot or choose not to drive cars for most of their getting from here to there.

Because many, many car/driver decisions are made by habit, congestion itself can serve as a motivator for change of behavior. Land use planning must be included in the decision process before transportation projects are underway instead of as a result of problems created by the transportation projects themselves. Transportation choices must include all the reasons that people need to get themselves and the things they need from place to place.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY OVERVIEW: A REPORT ON A TALK TO THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

BY JANET WINANS, TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR

Daniel Carlson from the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs spoke to the League of Women Voters of Seattle Transportation Committee in September. His focus was an overview of transportation policy during the last 60 years. He held a kind of seminar with the committee and left, I believe, with a new appreciation of the expertise we have in our committee members.
Action

**STATE ACTION WORKSHOP – WESTERN WASHINGTON**

**Date:** Saturday, November 21  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
**Place:** St. Andrews Lutheran Church  
2650 148th Ave. SE, Bellevue

The lobby team of the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) will again be holding two action workshops this month, in order to make it more convenient for members in different sections of the state to attend. In addition to the Bellevue workshop, there will be a workshop in Kennewick on Saturday, November 7. Both workshops will cover the same topics; members are welcome to register for either or both.

The workshops offer information and training on the legislative priorities for the coming year. The priorities to be addressed are Public Campaign Financing for Judicial Positions, Early Learning/Education and Washington State Budget issues.

Eastside units of the League of Women Voters of Seattle always provide a delicious lunch for the Bellevue workshop; lunch will also be served at the Kennewick session. So members who attend will have the opportunity to work and to socialize with members from other Leagues throughout the state, as well as to prepare for action in the new legislative session.

For more information, contact the state office at (206) 622-8961 or lwvwa@lwvwa.org.

The cost of the workshop is $25.

**NOVEMBER 3 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT ISSUES AND LEAGUE POSITIONS AS OF OCTOBER 20, 2009**

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<th>STATE BALLOT ISSUES</th>
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<td>Initiative 1033</td>
<td>The League of Women Voters of Washington opposes Initiative 1033.</td>
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<td>Referendum 71</td>
<td>The Leagues of Women Voters of Washington and Seattle support Referendum 71.</td>
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<td>King County Charter Amendment No. 3</td>
<td>The Leagues of Women Voters of Seattle and King County South support King County Charter Amendment No. 3.</td>
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<td>King County Charter Amendment No. 4</td>
<td>The Leagues of Women Voters of Seattle and King County South support King County Charter Amendment No. 4.</td>
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<th>CITY OF SEATTLE BALLOT ISSUE</th>
<th>LEAGUE POSITION</th>
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<td>Proposition 1 - Housing Levy</td>
<td>The League of Women Voters of Seattle supports Proposition No. 1.</td>
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The League of Women Voters of Washington and the League of Women Voters of Seattle oppose I-1033, as do many other organizations in the area, including the Seattle Council PTSA. The article reprinted below was distributed by the council to its members; membership chair Kelly Powers sent it on to us.

I-1033: Fiscal Impact Concerns

By Ramona Hattendorf, president Seattle Council PTSA
(The council consists of the 71 PTA and PTSA's in Seattle. We have 14,000 members)

There will be an initiative, I-1033, on the November ballot that if passed would significantly affect funding for K-12 education as well as health and social services for children. State analysis says general fund revenues would be reduced by close to $6 billion by 2015.

Supporters of the initiative, drafted by Tim Eyman, are concerned about property taxes and the growth of taxes at the city, county and state level. Opponents (which include the AARP as well as the Washington State PTA) feel the restraints placed on state revenue growth will damage education, health and social programs.

The board of the Seattle Council PTSA has endorsed a no position and will ask the council (that’s the coalition of all the PTA’s and PTSA’s in the city) to weigh in at its Oct. 5 general meeting.

The Office of Financial Management has prepared (as state law requires) a fiscal impact statement on the initiative: http://www.ofm.wa.gov/initiatives/i-1033_fiscal_impact.pdf

The analysis details the assumptions behind OFM’s opening summary:

“Initiative 1033 limits annual growth of state, city and county general fund revenue to the rate of inflation and population growth. General fund revenues exceeding this limit must be used to reduce the following year’s state, city or county general fund property tax levy. The initiative reduces state general fund revenues that support education; social, health and environmental services; and general government activities by an estimated $5.9 billion by 2015. The initiative also reduces general fund revenues that support public safety, infrastructure and general government activities by an estimated $694 million for counties and $2.1 billion for cities by 2015.”

To put that into perspective, last year the state legislature had to cut an unprecedented $9.1 billion from the 2009-11 budget. Health care was cut 13.5 percent; higher education was cut 13 percent; K-12 education was cut 5.3 percent – mainly by suspending cost of living increases for teachers and by cutting the student achievement fund, also referred to at the “class-size reduction” fund.

What did that mean for kids? Last year, Seattle Public Schools got $458 per child in student achievement funds. This year it will get $131 per child and next year it will get $99 per child.

The Washington State PTA and the board of the Seattle Council PTSA are concerned about the consequences of locking in state tax revenue to 2009 levels.

Additional resources about I-1033:
Secretary of State’s Website:
Yes campaign:
http://www.permanent-offense.org/
No campaign:
http://no1033.com/
Letter to the Editor

The following comment is the response of one League member to the recent Privatization Study.

**PRIVATIZE THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE?**

The Seattle League is not the only group considering the issue of privatization. *Parade* magazine, a nationally distributed Sunday newspaper supplement, carried an article on Page 8, September 13, 2009 titled “Can the Postal Service still Deliver?”

In a recent statement, Postmaster General John Potter said the Postal Service must take drastic measures to “reduce costs so that service is not diminished.” But some of his proposals—closing branches and stopping Saturday delivery—are not popular with customers.

“A private company might be more innovative, and that could help keep prices more stable for consumers,” says Prof. Michael Crew, who heads Rutgers University’s Center for Research in Regulated Industries. “The profit motive would bring a drive for efficiency.”

“Industries” indeed. The Postal Service is not an industry; it is a nationalized and one of the oldest government services, supported by tax dollars and modest user fees. Americans don’t expect their postal system to be cost-neutral any more than we expect our fire and police departments to pay for themselves.

And what other government service directly touches more of our citizens on an almost daily basis? I certainly do not mind paying for my postal services.

Jean Carlson

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**Diversity Policy**

The League of Women Voters of Seattle (LWVS), in both its values and practices, affirms its beliefs and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

LWVS recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. LWVS subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization’s ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

LWVS affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of Americans in its membership, board, staff and programs.
Membership Report by Kelly Powers, Membership Chair

Thanks to all who attended and helped with the Get to Know League dinner October 1 prior to the ballot issues forum. New and returning members included: Cassandra Carothers, Fred Cox, Erika de Bronac, Ginna Owens, Diana Hale, Marjorie Hawkes, Karen McFadden, Lori Michetti, Lily Reid, Doris Waggoner, and Carin Willette. Welcome all!

A special thanks to the speakers. Betty Sullivan explained the structure of the League – local, state and national – and ways members can be involved, including the Action Workshops this month where the state legislative goals are determined. Our new president, Allison Feher, explained how the League Program works: the cycle of studies, forums and unit meetings in which members discuss questions about the study or monthly topic and attempt to reach consensus. There were great questions from the audience such as: How are the monthly topics of study determined? What happens after a unit reports the results of the monthly discussion?

Several committee chairs and board members were also present for the new members to speak with—Ellen Berg, Judy Bevington, Maria Brusher, and Jean Carlson.

Many hands make light work! Thanks to Kitty Mahon, Lindsay Cummings, Lois Laughlin, Alice Rasp, Sue Gregory, Judith Ostrow, Julie Anne Kempf, Eleanor Laxsdall, Zita Cook, Martha Jordan, Elaine Birn, Karen Lahey, Peggy Saari, Denise Smith, Ginna Owens, Ellen Berg, Estelle Wertheimer and Maria Brusher. Thanks to all who were especially flexible when we learned that the church remodel was behind schedule and the ovens would not be available to us. Thanks to the unit leaders for asking members to volunteer. Thank you!

Thanks especially to members for reaching out and inviting potential new members. If you were not able to attend this month or know someone you would like to invite, save the date for March—Women's History Month—when we will host the next Get to Know League dinner.

New to the League? Take a moment to look at the various committees and the upcoming calendar in the Voter. If something interests you, or you need a ride, call the member contact.

CONDOLENCE

Our thoughts are with member Flora Belle Key whose sister recently died.

NEW MEMBERS

A very warm welcome to these new and returning members of the League of Women Voters of Seattle.

Brigette Ashley is a preschool teacher. She has a BA in Theatre performance with a minor in Political Science from Chapman University in Orange, CA. She attended a unit meeting with Liv Grohn and decided to join. She lives in Medina and is very interested in education and becoming more involved in local politics, particularly schools in her area.

Barbara Scheffer Steiniche is a member of the University House unit. She has an M.S. in nutrition. She joined the League to get information and is specifically interested in election reform and international relations.

Fran Trowbridge is a retired art educator and former volunteer art teacher at the Seattle Art Museum. She is currently a volunteer docent at the Seattle Public Library. Fran is also a member of the University House unit; she appreciates the League’s analysis of issues and candidate forums.

Carin Willette worked for 20 plus years in hospital billing for the University of Washington Hospital Financial Services. She first heard about the League as a child in California and then here in Seattle. She currently lives in the Lake City neighborhood. She enjoys folk singing and she offers her skills in writing and editing.
BOOK REVIEW by Vicky Downs


by Steven R. Weisman

Nora Leech, Chair of the League’s Economic and Taxation Committee, urged me to review The Great Tax Wars, which the committee read a year or so ago. All of us reading it were surprised that a book on taxes could be both interesting and filled with fascinating cultural observations and engaging information about the leaders who shaped the debate. For example, we learned that Teddy Roosevelt’s experiences as a New York police commissioner convinced him that income inequality would lead to chaos, crime and anarchy.

This book, written by a political reporter for the New York Times, covers “six decades of battles over wealth, power and fairness that led to one of the most important progressive achievements in making modern America: establishing the income tax.”

I did not know that the American government’s need for money until the time of the Civil War was primarily satisfied by tariffs and duties on imports. However, by 1862, with battles raging and blockades making commerce with Europe difficult, an income tax on the very wealthy provided the means to pay for the soldiers and armaments needed to win. In the South, bank vaults emptied and the Confederacy had to borrow and print money to protect their homeland. In less than a decade after the war, Congress repealed the income tax as “no longer necessary.”

Weisman describes two main views regarding income taxes. Both sides want it to be fair, but differ on “what is fair?” One side believes income tax at graduated rates, “according to the ability to pay, should help establish some level of social equity to curb the power of great wealth” over the country. Others believe it “is fair and vital to the country to allow citizens to keep the wealth they earned.” They see income tax as wrecking the incentives that fueled American prosperity.

In the early 20th century, America was transforming from an agrarian society to a vast industrial nation. When huge fortunes were amassed, “farmers and workers rebelled.” People with low incomes paid a higher percentage of their earnings on necessary goods, and many of those items were more expensive because of tariffs and duties. To most workers, the graduated income tax seemed only fair. By 1913, Congress was the arena of a big fight: not over the principle of an income tax, but over how progressive to make it.

At that time, President Wilson believed government needed to act “as a counterweight to corporate wealth and as an aggressive agent to help ordinary men and women.” Little did he know that the income tax would soon be driven upward, not by human justice but by the First World War.

I daydreamed through the only economics course I ever took. This book, published in 2002, kept me awake and profoundly interested in the ever-changing tax debate.

The opinions in this review are personal and do not represent those of the LWV.
November Program: State Budget

Unit Meeting Agenda:

Unit Business:
- Introductions and welcome of guests and visitors
- Attendance and sign-ups
- Board announcements

Discussion Questions:

There are no consensus questions today, simply some suggestions to stimulate your discussion of the materials and the information that was presented at the forum. Nonetheless, please record your answers to help us plan further study and action in this area. All ideas should be included even if there is disagreement among the members. This month’s program is part of the League of Women Voters of Washington’s statewide Civic Engagement Project. The goal is not just to educate ourselves but to reach out to the community in a way that may help reframe the debate and help people understand the importance of their tax dollars, how they are used, and options for generating tax revenues to fund government services. That is why we are asking you what steps you would like to see our local league take to achieve this goal and how you would be willing to volunteer in that effort.

1) What do you see as the most critical problem in our current tax structure?

2) What options are there to change/improve the current structure?

3) The League currently advocates on tax issues through the lobby team. What additional ways can we affect change in these areas?

4a) What other community organizations do you belong to?

4b) Would you be willing to reach out to the organizations you belong to and engage them in discussions about the State Budget and our current tax structure?

For example:
- Offer to speak about the budget process
- Disseminate materials about the budget process
- Other ideas________

5) What additional information might make decisions regarding taxation easier to follow?
Where Does the Money Come From?
Where Does it Go?
The Washington State Tax System

Materials developed by the
League of Women Voters of Washington
Civic Engagement Project Steering Committee

For additional materials and resources visit the website: www.lwvwa.org
How Does Washington’s Tax System Measure Up?*

You can judge a state’s tax system based on a number of different criteria. Here are some generally accepted criteria and some observations from reputable sources as to how Washington’s tax system measures up.

Adequacy: Do tax revenues keep up with normal growth in public services as the state’s population and economy expand? Historical revenue growth, trends in consumer spending habits, and the effects of recent voter-approved tax reduction measures suggest that general fund revenue under Washington’s present tax system is likely to grow 10 to 15 percent more slowly than the demand for state government services in the long run. This is the key to what is called the “structural deficit.”

Stability: Can the tax system provide the revenue necessary to maintain public services notwithstanding fluctuations in economic activity? Washington’s mix of taxes, with its heavy dependence on the retail sales tax (with exemptions for food and prescription drugs) causes tax revenues to grow faster than the economy in good times and contract more in downturns.

Equity and Fairness: Is the tax burden distributed fairly? Are the taxes paid by individuals and businesses “fair,” relative to the ability to pay and relative to the benefits received? Washington’s tax structure is regressive, with the sales tax being the main cause of the regressivity. In addition, the property tax is independent of people’s ability to pay. The lowest income households pay 17.6% of income for total excise and property taxes while the highest income households pay 3.3% for the same taxes.**

Economic Vitality and Harmony with Other States: Does the tax system place businesses at a competitive disadvantage to their competitors in other states? Does it support a stable economic infrastructure conducive to a vital and growing economy? Washington relies more heavily on taxes collected from businesses compared to households than other states. In addition, the high sales tax creates a significant incentive to shop out of state and causes problems for Washington retailers.

Economic Neutrality and Efficiency: Do businesses or consumers make decisions based on economic advantages rather than tax advantages? Washington’s tax system creates incentives for taxpayers – both businesses and individuals – to change their behavior in order to take advantage of differential tax treatment.

Transparency and Administrative Simplicity: Is it clear to taxpayers how much they are paying? Can the system be administered at low cost without imposing an undue compliance burden on the taxpayer? Most of Washington’s taxes are relatively simple to administer for both government and households. A significant part of the tax system is not transparent to households. Most households are not aware of their annual sales tax burden even though the sales tax is explicitly stated on invoices and receipts.


League of Women Voters of Washington
Civic Engagement Project, August, 2009
Why Budget Deficits? Why Now?

Normal Business Cycles

The term business cycle or economic cycle refers to fluctuations in economic activity around a long-term growth trend. It typically involves shifts between periods of relatively rapid economic growth (expansion or boom), and periods of relatively stagnation or decline (contraction or recession).

The business cycle typically has four stages: 1. expansion (increase in production and prices, low interest rates) 2. crisis (stock exchanges crash and multiple bankruptcies of firms occur) 3. recession (drops in prices and in output, high interest rates) 4. recovery (stocks recover because of the fall in prices and incomes). In the cycles before World War II or that of the late 1990s in the United States, the growth periods usually ended with the failure of speculative investments built on a bubble of confidence.

No Ordinary Recession

This is no ordinary recession. Reckless decisions in credit and financial markets, whose potential impacts were not foreseen by regulators, led to economic crisis on a scale not experienced since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Lenders are not lending. Businesses are going under as a result.

“Until our national banking and credit system is restored to good health, businesses and households lack the capital and confidence to jumpstart our economy,” said Dr. Arun Raha, Washington state’s chief revenue forecaster.

Talking to small business owners in Washington, you hear comments like “I can not get loans to float my business even though the demand is there. I will be laying off people.”

Revenue Losses

As the economy slows, people stop spending, business earnings decline and the state collects less revenue.

2005 Flush Times

In flush times of growth (or bubble), the revenue comes pouring in. “Due to the continuing strength in the state’s housing market, revenue collections remain high.” (Sept 2005, Office of Financial Management) But flush times produce increased need to accommodate the growth. Although the state did establish a “rainy day fund” to draw on in times of need, a general mindset that major downturns in the business cycle would no longer occur helped blind the state to the possibility of a severe recession and the need to plan for it.

2009 Tough Times

The decrease in sales taxes (home, retail and car sales), B&O business taxes, property taxes and investment returns are responsible for 90% revenue losses estimated at $9 billion for 2009-2011 -- the largest revenue loss in the history of Washington State.

In our state, 58% of the general fund budget is off-limits to cuts. This includes constitutionally mandated spending e.g., Medicaid, pensions, debt service and basic education. Therefore 100% of the cuts must come from the remaining 42% of the budget comprised of unprotected programs such as law enforcement, prisons, higher education, health care, retraining programs for the newly unemployed, programs for the chronically poor, parks and unprotected parts of K-12 education.
Conclusion
States must plan for economic downturns. Programs for those hit by massive layoffs must be strong to tide people over to the future upswing in economic activity. Some argue that, in the face of decreased revenues, spending should be reined in. Others say that new spending is necessary in order to avoid an even deeper recession. And some contend that the problem of state budget deficits is not a temporary one that will disappear with the next upswing in business -- but is, instead, rooted in the basic structure of the state’s tax system.
The State Tax System

Washingtonians pay taxes to the state and to local (county, city and special) taxing districts, which all together form the “state tax system.”¹⁰ (County Finances: Tax and Revenue Systems in Washington Counties, 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Responsibilities (The State We're In: Washington)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>281 towns or cities</td>
<td>Land use, animal control, roads, police, municipal courts¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 counties</td>
<td>Collect property tax, conduct elections, support superior and district courts and county jails, protect public health, provide services – social, sheriff, parks and recreation, waste management, water, roads, land use planning and regulation¹²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295 school districts</td>
<td>Operate and build schools (2009 Citizen's Guide to K-12 Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1,100 additional special purpose districts</td>
<td>Usually just one job -- for example, run a port, provide sewage treatment, manage irrigation in a certain area, build and maintain a ball park, create the Tacoma Zoo. There are cemetery districts, mosquito control districts, fire districts, library districts, and transit districts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State Government Spending 2007-2009

“As of the 2008 legislative session, the State of Washington will spend a total of $69.2 billion for the 2007-2009 biennium.”¹⁰⁴ (2009 Citizen's Guide to the Budget)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where does the money come from?</th>
<th>Where does the money go?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Billions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Billions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Human services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal &amp; other grants</td>
<td>$24.7 35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licenses, permits,</td>
<td>K-12 Public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges for services,</td>
<td>16.1 23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Tuition &amp; fees</td>
<td>Higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>10.3 14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sources</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.1 10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Governmental operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debt service/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$69.2 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State’s Spending Categories

Human services category covers the operation of the Department of Social and Health Services, the state’s umbrella organization that provides medical, social, and income assistance to citizens in need. The category also includes the money that is spent to incarcerate prisoners, under the Department of Corrections, and certain services relating to public health, under the Department of Health. One-fifth of the state’s citizens receive one or more of these human services. The federal and state governments split the costs evenly of most human service programs. Federal regulations and monitoring govern federal grants. There are over 35,500 full-time employees in the Human Services category.

K-12 Public Schools category, including both state and federal funds, provides K-12 school districts with 71% of the funds used to educate more than 1,000,000 public school students. Elected school boards in the 295 school districts raise the rest by asking voters to approve school capital bonds and school levies from property taxes.

Whereas “state laws set the basic rules for schools, local school boards are responsible for the budgets and policies of their schools. Boards can add local graduation requirements, negotiate contracts with teachers, decide when and whether to build new schools, and what academic programs and sports will be offered.” Over 102,000 full-time employees report to their respective school districts.

An ongoing school budget question is: what does the state government need to spend in order to meet the Constitutional clause that “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders”? The money search widens with the 2009 legislature’s expansion of the “basic education” definition to include early childhood.

Higher Education includes funding for six public universities, and 34 community colleges and technical schools serving almost 235,000 full-time students. It also includes financial aid to nearly 135,000 students attending both state-supported and private colleges. In addition to state tax revenues, higher education receives $7.0 billion of dedicated revenues, principally grants and contracts, and tuition and fees. This budget supports over 47,500 full-time employees. The Governor appoints regents, trustees, and board members who govern the higher education institutions.

Transportation covers the operations of the Department of Transportation, the Washington State Patrol, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and other transportation programs, as well as construction of highways and bridges.

Government Operations category covers the day-to-day operations of administrative, judicial, and legislative agencies.

Natural Resources category covers the operation of state agencies for environmental protection, management, and recreation.

Debt Service pays “the interest and principle costs of facilities and services funded through general obligation bonds.”
Creating the State Government Budget Washington State Budget Process

The Three Budgets

At the beginning of each annual legislative session, the plans for how the state government will raise and spend its money are laid out in three different budgets: (1) Transportation, (2) Capital, and (3) Operating.\textsuperscript{XV}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>2007-09 Planned Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Covers transportation operations and the building of highways and bridges</td>
<td>$4.5 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Used to build new buildings and parks</td>
<td>$7.5 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
<td>Contributes to both lower and higher education. Covers the day-to-day running of state agencies and prisons</td>
<td>$57.2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>$69.2 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The $4.5 billion Transportation Budget covers the operations of transportation agencies as well as the building of highways and bridges. Federal funds make up approximately one-fourth of the Transportation budget, which authorizes capital bonds. Gas taxes are also “dedicated” to funding transportation purposes.\textsuperscript{XVI}

The $7.5 billion Capital Budget is used to build and renovate new buildings and parks. Only state funds are included in the Capital budget, which also authorizes the issuance of capital bonds.\textsuperscript{XVII}

The $57.2 billion Operating Budget is supported by (1) Federal grants dedicated to specific purposes, (2) state accounts for specific purposes, and (3) the State General Fund.

\textsuperscript{XV} The $4.5 billion Transportation Budget covers the operations of transportation agencies as well as the building of highways and bridges. Federal funds make up approximately one-fourth of the Transportation budget, which authorizes capital bonds. Gas taxes are also “dedicated” to funding transportation purposes.

\textsuperscript{XVI} The $7.5 billion Capital Budget is used to build and renovate new buildings and parks. Only state funds are included in the Capital budget, which also authorizes the issuance of capital bonds.

\textsuperscript{XVII} The $57.2 billion Operating Budget is supported by (1) Federal grants dedicated to specific purposes, (2) state accounts for specific purposes, and (3) the State General Fund.
1. Federal grants dedicated to specific purposes represent over one-third of the operating budget. Social services, education, and health receive the largest share of federal funds.

2. All three budgets use some of the 400+ “dedicated” accounts, with specific sources of revenue to be used for certain purposes. However, the legislature can amend the laws concerning accounts, sometimes within the budget bill itself. State appropriations contribute support in varying degrees to some of the accounts.

3. The State General Fund, which is the largest state account, represents half of the operating budget and receives all the state’s major tax revenues. In 2007-2009, these were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Sales Tax</td>
<td>$15.0 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Occupations Tax</td>
<td>5.6 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Tax</td>
<td>3.0 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate Excise Tax</td>
<td>1.2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Utility Tax</td>
<td>0.8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Lottery proceeds and other tax; e.g., liquor, tobacco, insurance premiums)</td>
<td>3.1 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 28.6 billion

The State General Fund receives the most attention during the budget-building process for a number of reasons:

- All major state tax revenues are deposited into it.
- It is the largest state account.
- Compared to their control over other state funds, the Governor and Legislature have “the greatest discretion over how these state revenues are spent.”
- It is the lynchpin for the state’s annual spending cap established by Initiative 601.

The General Fund and six other accounts are dubbed the “near General Fund”. This group of funds was often the focus of media attention during the 2009 legislative session.

**The Budget Players**

The Governor proposes the three budgets. The legislature works and acts on each budget for the Governor’s signature. “The Governor may veto all or part of the budget, thereby eliminating funding for certain activities; however, the Governor cannot add money for an activity for which the legislature provided no funding. Only after the legislature passes a budget and the Governor signs it has the state created a real budget.”

The voters play direct roles in the state’s spending decisions through their Constitutional right of initiative and their power to approve or disapprove certain taxes, fees, and bonds.

Through initiative, citizens have the power to “bypass the legislature, write a proposed law and have the people vote on it.” The degree to which an approved initiative is implemented may depend on availability of funds, executive decisions, legislation, and subsequent initiatives.
A far-reaching budget initiative is Initiative 601 (p. 26), passed in 1993. It and its subsequent revisions place an annual spending cap on the combined State General Fund and six related accounts – Public Safety and Education Account, Equal Justice Account, Water Quality Account, Violence Reduction and Drug Enforcement Account, Student Achievement Account, and Health Services Account. Initiative 601 also requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to increase state taxes. Voter approval is needed if such increase will result in spending more than the state cap. In 2007, Initiative 960 added these requirements: an advisory vote by the electorate if legislative action raising taxes is not subject to the above referendum; prior legislative approval for new or increased administrative fees by state agencies; and the state Office of Financial Management must publish a ten-year cost projection for any proposed legislation that increases state fees or taxes.

Citizens have the power to approve or disapprove certain taxes, fees, and bonds. There are several dates during the year when a special purpose district, local government, or the legislature may ask voters to tax themselves by a levy from the property tax.

For instance, in February 2009, the Peninsula School District’s replacement levy passed. A month later, school bond elections for the Tacoma, Puyallup, Auburn, and Vashon Island school districts were defeated.

The Washington Constitution and state law place a heavy responsibility on voters to be as thoughtful in their budget decisions as they expect their elected representatives to be. In preparation for this task, voters can find helpful information from:

League of Women Voters of Washington  www.lwwa.org


Washington’s Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) Committee  http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/default.asp


Washington Senate Ways and Means Staff  2009 Citizen's Guide to the Budget

League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) Education Fund and Institute for Washington’s Future, 
County Finances: Tax and Revenue Systems in Washington Counties, 2000, p. 4.


Ibid., p. 93

The staff prepares this guide annually.

Ibid., p. 12.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., p. 9, 12.

LWVWA Education Fund, op. cit., pp. 103-4.

Washington Senate WAM staff, op. cit., p. 8.


Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., p. 5.

LWVWA Education Fund, Washington State Tax Study Update, Executive Summary, September 2004; and 
Washington Senate WAM staff, op. cit.

HB 1314 and SB 5352 present the Transportation budget being considered by the 2009 Washington legislature.

HB 1216 and SB 5222 present the Capital budget being considered by the 2009 Washington legislature.

HB 1244 and SB 5600 present the Operating budget being considered by the 2009 Washington legislature. There were $19.6 federal funds in the early April 2009 House draft.


Washington Senate WAM staff, op. cit., p. 2, 10.

Ibid., p. 12.


Washington Senate WAM staff, op. cit., p. 15.


Description of the Three Major General Fund Taxes

The Retail Sales Tax

Retail sales taxes are added to the selling price of most goods sold for consumption such as clothing, movies, cars, and construction. Some services such as haircuts and dry cleaning are taxed and some services such as lawyers and stockbroker fees are excluded. Food and prescription drugs are currently exempt. (The definition of “food” affects whether a particular edible item will be taxed.)

The tax rate levied by the state is 6.5%. Local jurisdictions are authorized to add local sales taxes, not to exceed an additional 3.1%.

There are thirteen different types of local sales taxes, including those for cities and counties; for transit purposes; for funding high capacity transportation; for criminal justice, for public facilities, for county correctional facilities; for professional sports stadiums (credited against the state sales tax with no additional impact on taxpayers); and for zoos.

In 2008 Washington changed the way the sales tax is applied, so that retailers delivering goods to customers in Washington now must collect the sales tax based on where the customer receives the merchandise. This was done in order to join a national agreement (the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement) so that Washington could collect sales tax from online and mail order retailers when Congress passes legislation making it possible.

Features:
- People see only small amounts going out at a time, and are generally not aware of the total annual amount they pay.
- It is a large and efficient revenue producer.
- It is one of the few ways to obtain tax money from nonresidents.
- It is regressive in nature.
- It is not a stable source of funds because people consume less in economic downturns, and more when the economy is on the rise.
- It motivates people to buy in regions with little or no sales tax.
- Sales taxes are supposed to be paid by residents on items bought out of state, but, until the recent change in law, few people paid them.

The Business and Occupations Tax

The B&O Tax is a tax on the gross receipts of a business, unrelated to any profit. It is levied on all business conducted within the state except utility activities, agricultural production, rental of real estate, and investment income earned by businesses other than financial institutions. It is measured by gross sales, gross income, or the value of products made within the state. Unlike a corporate or individual income tax, the B&O tax provides no deductions.
for any of the costs of doing business; the tax is levied on all business receipts. Although rates are low, the tax raises considerable revenue due to the large base.

In addition to the State B&O tax, some cities also assess a B&O tax, at a lower rate. There is no administrative connection between state and city B&O taxes.

Features:
- The tax assures that all businesses not exempt from the tax contribute something for the government services they use, whether or not they make a profit.
- It treats corporate and non-corporate business alike.
- It imposes a heavy burden on startup firms and those with low or no profits.
- It is charged on the total value of goods multiple times as the goods move through the distribution chain on the way to the consumer.
- It has more exemptions than any other area of taxation; many exemptions apply to specific materials or services within an industry that is not otherwise exempt.

The Property Tax

Property taxes are levied by the state, counties, cities and many local jurisdictions like ports and schools on the value of real property (land and buildings) and personal property (moveable items like business equipment and machinery) owned by individuals and businesses.

Property tax bills are determined by taking the assessed valuation of property, (set by the county tax assessor based on the market value) and multiplying it by the tax rates that are fixed by the various taxing jurisdictions.

In 1972, voters amended the state constitution to establish a 1% limit on regular property levies, requiring that the aggregate of all tax levies upon real and personal property shall not exceed one percent of the true fair value of that property annually.

Levies beyond the 1% require voter approval; they are called excess or special levies. Most excess or special levies require 60% voter approval. In 2008 the voters approved a new law so that special school levies only require a majority vote.

The state’s portion of the regular levy is for the support of common schools, however this levy covers less than 30% of the funding for K-12 public education.

Features:
- Everyone in a jurisdiction pays the same rate. People with higher value property and more property pay more taxes.
- Property taxes are more transparent because each parcel gets an itemized bill each year. Real property is geographically bound and therefore easier to identify than profits or sales.
• In times of recession, falling prices cause decreases in assessed valuations, and therefore in the tax base, resulting in decreased revenue.
• When property values rise, assessed valuations rise too, sometimes resulting in higher property tax bills that people may find difficult to pay.

**The State’s Relationship to Local Jurisdictions**

Cities, counties and special purpose taxing districts such as the ports, derive their power to act and to raise the revenue needed to carry out their functions from the state. Consequently, changes in the state tax structure will have effects on the local jurisdictions. Small cities can be particularly impacted. Anti-tax initiatives like Initiative 695, the motor vehicle license tax repeal, have already severely impacted local governments.

While taxes are not the only source of revenue for local jurisdictions, in Washington over 60% of local revenue comes from the property tax and about 20% from the retail sales tax. State enabling legislation gives cities more latitude than counties to impose their own taxes; many of them impose their own B&O taxes. Most special districts have more limitations, sharing primarily in the property tax. The state receives a portion of property tax and redistributes it to school districts, which have taxing power only through special levies on property taxes.
Basic Information on Bonds

A bond is a formal document that represents a loan, an IOU. The state borrows money by issuing bonds, another source of state revenues. There are two main types of bonds, primarily distinguished by the source of the funds used to pay back the money that has been borrowed:

**General Obligation (GO) Bonds**, the traditional way of financing major construction projects, are backed by the full faith and credit and taxing power of the state. Their term is usually 25 years and interest is federal tax-exempt; the rates are typically 2 percent below taxable bonds. They are repaid from the general fund and thus are subject to the state debt limit. Authorizing them requires a 60 percent vote by the Legislature.

**Reimbursable Bonds** are a form of general obligation bonds that are paid from sources other than the general fund. The State of Washington issues general obligation bonds to finance projects authorized in the capital and transportation budgets. The debt-limit reimbursable bond retirement account is created in the state treasury. This account is exclusively devoted to the payment of principal and interest on, and retirement of, bonds authorized by the legislature.

Bonds can be used to finance projects with appropriations of $250,000 or more for the following accounts:

- Higher Education Construction,
- State Vehicle Parking,
- State and Local Waste Disposal,
- State Building Construction,
- Outdoor Recreation,
- Riparian Protection,
- Multimodal Transportation,
- Habitat Conservation,
- Capital Historic District,
- State Taxable Building Construction,
- School Construction and Skills Center Building,
- Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development.
- New Capital Project (if a new bond bill)

Complex, detailed regulations specify which expenditures are allowable under bond funding of projects. Additionally, the I.R.S. places certain limitations on the issuance of tax-exempt bonds.
Resources for Understanding
Washington State Revenue Sources and the State Budget Process

Where Does the Money Come From?

Information in this section comes from *A Citizen’s Guide to the Washington State Budget* [Reference #1 at the bottom of this paper]

Most of the money the state uses to pay for services comes from state taxes: sales tax, property tax, and the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax which taxes gross receipts rather than profit or income. Washington is one of seven states that does not have an income tax.

To pay for its activities, the state taxes citizens and businesses; receives federal and other grants; collects fees and assesses charges for licenses and permits; and borrows. In addition, there are other sources, including transfers. The state will also receive federal stimulus funds in 2009 and 2010.

| 2007-09 revenue |  
|-----------------|------------------|
| Taxes           | 48.1%            |
| Federal and other grants | 25.7% |
| Licenses, permits & charges for services | 16.2% |
| Borrowing       | 7.4%             |
| Other sources (including transfers) | 2.6% |

State Taxes

Information in this section comes from the *Washington State Yearbook* [Reference #2 at the bottom of this paper]

The *Yearbook*, in turn, obtains its information from the Office of the Governor and the Office of the Secretary of State.

The *Yearbook* lists the state tax categories, and provides data regarding the tax base for each type of tax, a description of the tax, and the rate.

- **State General and Selective Sales Taxes**
  Example: Rental car tax (Tax base: Retail car rentals; Tax rate, 5.9%)

- **State Gross Receipts/Business Taxes**
  Example: Insurance premiums tax (Tax base: Gross premiums received by licensed insurers; Tax rate: Ocean marine/trade 0.95%, all other insurers, 2.0%).

- **State Property Tax – Schools**
(Tax base: assessed value of taxable real and personal property, annually
adjusted to 100% true and fair value.)

- **State Excise Taxes in lieu of property tax**
  Example: Timber excise tax (Tax base: Stumpage value of timber at the time
  of harvest; Tax rate: public lands 2.9% (2008), private lands 1.0%).

- **Other State Taxes**
  Example: Real Estate excise tax (Tax base: sales of real property; Tax
  rate 1.28% of selling price).

- **Major Local Government Tax Sources**
  Example: King County Stadiums (Tax base: Prepared food and drinks, 0.5%;
  baseball sales/use, 0.017%;
  football sales/use, 0.016%)

**Other State Revenue by Source [2]**

- Licenses, permits and fees
- Federal revenue, by department and program
- State charges and miscellaneous revenue
- Private/local revenue
- Transfers
- Other revenues and financing sources (principally bond activity).

**Additional Revenues**

- **City and County Taxes** - Department of Revenue [www.dor.wa.gov](http://www.dor.wa.gov)
  To find the tax rates of your city and county, use the Department of Revenue’s
  website dor.wa.gov and in the left hand column, click on “Sales and use tax
  rates” and then your address. The sales tax varies by municipality. The
  personal property tax comprises 30% of state and local taxes. It funds public
  schools, libraries, fire departments, parks and recreation. The amount which
  is to be paid is determined by the County Assessor; the state Treasurer collects
  the tax.

- **Federal Funds**
  Washington receives federal funds from a number of departments. For a
  complete list, plus the dollar amounts that the state received in 2008, refer to
  the Washington State Yearbook, 2009 (Reference #2, below).

- **Stimulus Funds** [www.wa.gov](http://www.wa.gov)
  To learn how your community will benefit from the current stimulus funds, go
  to wa.gov, then “Official Site of Governor Chris Gregoire”; in the right-hand
  column, click on “Federal Recovery.” There is a county-by-county map of
  recovery funding, amounts and programs.

- **Department of Natural Resources** [www.dnr.wa.gov](http://www.dnr.wa.gov)
  In its website, dnr.wa.gov, there are headings which describe programs which
  generate revenue. For example, “Leasing & Land Transactions” provides
information on the sale and lease of public lands. It gives notice of upcoming auctions as well as providing the prices paid at recent auctions. The land for sale is listed by county. Additional headings provide information on other revenue-generating programs in this department (license fees, leases, and others).
WASHINGTON STATE BUDGET PROCESS – RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

For a description of the budget process, as well as charts illustrating the sources of revenue, go to the website www.wa.gov, then click on “Governor Christine Gregoire”; in the left-hand column, click on “Washington State Budget Process.”

Excellent information on the budget process can also be found on the website of the Office of Financial Management, www.ofm.wa.gov/reports/budgetprocess.

Major Resources/References:

Senate Ways and Means Committee
311 John A. Cherberg Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0482
Telephone: 360-786-7715
Fax: 360-786-7615
http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate/scs/wm/default.htm

Electronic Handbook Publishers Inc.
704 – 228th Ave NE
Sammamish WA 98074
Telephone: 425-836-0598
Fax: 425-836-0310
info@washingtonstateyearbook.com
Public libraries also carry this book.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Complete Mailing Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>League of Women Voters of Seattle</td>
<td>1620 18th Ave. S.E. 101, Seattle, WA 98122</td>
</tr>
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11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: If none, check box.

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<th>Complete Mailing Address</th>
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12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
- [ ] The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.
- [ ] The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have changed during preceding 12 months. (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

### 13. Publication Title

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<tr>
<th>Membership news &amp; information</th>
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<tr>
<td>SEATTLE VOTER</td>
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<td>NOVEMBER 2009</td>
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### 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

- October 2009

### Membership News & Information

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paid Distribution Outside the Mail Indicating Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS® (e.g. First-Class Mail®)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>690</td>
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### c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 10a (1), (2), (3), and (4))

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### e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 10d (1), (2), (3) and (4))

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### 9. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers 84 (page 93))

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### 10. Percent Paid (10c divided by 10d times 100)

| 99.70 |
| 94.70 |

### 16. Publication of Statement of Ownership

- If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the November issue of this publication.

| Publication not required. |

### 17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

- Lindsay Cunningham, Staff

<table>
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## Unit Meetings

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<th>Email</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, November 9</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southend</strong> - Sam Scharff</td>
<td><a href="mailto:webcats@speakeasy.net">webcats@speakeasy.net</a></td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Lila Bulen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3716 Cascadia Ave. S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issaquah Evening</strong> - Ann Thornton</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anninissaquah@gmail.com">anninissaquah@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Hill</strong> - Jeannette Kahlenberg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kahlenb@gmail.com">kahlenb@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Mary Margaret Pruitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Horizon House, 900 University St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sky Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capitol Hill/Montlake</strong> - Jan O’Connor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oconnor.js@gmail.com">oconnor.js@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>7:15 pm</td>
<td>Vicky Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>909 E. Newton #D9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, November 10</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bellevue</strong> - Bonnie Rimawi</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bonnierim@aol.com">bonnierim@aol.com</a></td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Bellevue Regional Library Rm 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1111 110th Ave. NE, Bellevue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Seattle Day</strong> - Ethel Williams/Ann Bowden</td>
<td><a href="mailto:etheljw1@q.com">etheljw1@q.com</a></td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Ann Bowden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Kenney, 7125 Fauntleroy SW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Seattle Evening</strong> - Eleanor Laxdall</td>
<td><a href="mailto:laxdall@aol.com">laxdall@aol.com</a></td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Eleanor Laxdall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3525 SW Seola Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, November 11</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North End Afternoon</strong> - Jo Dawson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:warrenandjo@comcast.net">warrenandjo@comcast.net</a></td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Helen St. John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12045 8th Ave NW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magnolia/Queen Anne/Ballard Eve</strong> - Bettina Hosler</td>
<td><a href="mailto:glencoe1985@aol.com">glencoe1985@aol.com</a></td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Bettina Hosler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9516 2nd Ave NW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View Ridge</strong> - Gail Winberg</td>
<td>winbergeng.comcast.net</td>
<td>12:45 pm</td>
<td>Gail Winberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6004 NE 60th St</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Thursday, November 12

**Issaquah Day** - Margaret Austin  
 margaretaustin@comcast.net  
 10:00 am  Issaquah City Hall and Police  
 130 E Sunset Way, Coho Room  
 (upstairs) **Note Time Change**

**Kirkland/Redmond** - Sheila Hoff  
 srhoff123@yahoo.com  
 7:00 pm  Liv Grohn  
 338 10th Ave, Kirkland  
 (call for directions)

**Mercer Island** - Lucy Copass/Cynthia Howe  
 lucyco@speakeasy.org  
 howe.john@comcast.net  
 9:15 am  Mercer Island Presbyterian Church  
 3605 84th Ave. SE, Mercer Island

**Shoreline** - Juliet Beard  
 juliet@windermere.com  
 4:30 pm  Richmond Beach Congregational Church -NW 195th and 15th Ave. NW

**North Central** - Jan Orlando  
 orlanre@aol.com  
 7:30 pm  Alice Rasp  
 4523 5th Ave.

**University House** - Barbara Denis/ Judy Coskey  
 bdenis340@comcast.net  
 tjcoskey@msn.com  
 10:00 am University House  
 4400 Stone Way N

### Wednesday, November 18

**North King County** - Rejean Idzerda  
 idzerda@comcast.net  
 9:30 am  Lake Forest Park Third Place Books, 17171 NE Bothell Way

### Saturday, November 21

**Ballard/Queen Anne/Magnolia Day** - Kim Peterson/Kerry Peterson  
 (Kim)  
 10:00 am Seattle Public Library - Magnolia Branch, 2801 34th Ave. W
# Board & Committee Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Executive Committee</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Allison Feher</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008–2010</td>
<td>1st V.P. Outreach</td>
<td>Maria Brusher</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008–2010</td>
<td>2nd V.P. Program</td>
<td>Nora Luchens</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008–2010</td>
<td>3rd V.P.</td>
<td>Sarah Luthens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>4th V.P. Voter Editor</td>
<td>Beatrice Crane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Brita Butler-Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Judy Bevington</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Kelly Powers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Christal Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Jean Carlson</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<th>Email Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Co-President</td>
<td>Denise Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Co-President</td>
<td>Laura Weese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008–2010</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Lucy Gaskill-Gaddis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2011</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Kris Bushley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Dorothy Y. Sale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Off-Board Positions**

- **CIS Coordinator**: Cynthia Howe, howe.john@comcast.net

**Committees**

- **Civics Education**: Dana Twight, dctwight@u.washington.edu
- **Economics & Taxation**: Nora Luchens, nleech2002@yahoo.com
- **Education**: Lucy Gaskill-Gaddis, terrylucy2u@comcast.net
- **Social Justice Committee**: Jayne Freitag-Koontz, jfkoontz@comcast.net
- **Immigration**: Barbara Reid, barbereid@yahoo.com
- **International Relations**: Ellen Berg, ellenberg@msn.com
- **Land Use**: Karen Kane, kanek@iopener.net
- **Transportation**: Janet Winans, janetwinans@earthlink.net
- **Port Study**: Linda Brown, brownlj@comcast.net
- **Privatization Study**: Nora Luchens, nleech2002@yahoo.com
The League of Women Voters of Seattle
1620 18th Ave, Suite 101
Seattle WA 98122

Moving? Let us know!
Call the League office at (206) 329-4848 or email info@seattlelwv.org

LWV SEATTLE: NOVEMBER FORUM

The State Budget and the Current Economy

Seattle First Baptist Church
1111 Harvard Ave. (Harvard and Seneca)

Thursday, November 5

6:30          Unit Briefing
7:30-9:00     Forum

Speakers include
Jeff Chapman, Washington Budget and Policy Center
Alyson Fout, Washington Department of Revenue
Dick Davis, Washington Research Council

All forums are free and open to the public.

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