

# What Part of “Paramount Duty” Does the Legislature not Understand?

from Lake Washington Education Association

Our state constitution requires Washington to fully fund basic education. In fact, it calls it the state’s “paramount duty.” Washington has the strongest language of any state when it comes to education funding—no other state protects public education to the extent that ours does.

So, why are the Governor and legislators considering the following in order to balance the state budget?

- Reduce the school year by 5 days.
- Increase class sizes by an average of two students per class in grades 4 through 12.
- Cut teacher salaries.
- Reduce teacher health care benefits.
- Slash funding for 1,000 preschool students.
- Reduce assistance to property-poor school districts by \$150 million.
- Suspend salary step increases for teachers.
- End sick leave cash-out for employees not retiring.
- Eliminate funding for student bus transportation.
- Eliminate the National Board bonus.
- Cut funding for all-day kindergarten in high-poverty schools.

Here are the facts:

- Washington is 49th in the nation in class size.
- We rank 47th in the nation in per-pupil spending.
- We’re dead last in average compensation among West Coast states.
- Nearly 3,700 educators’ jobs have already been slashed by the legislature.
- Enrollment in our state has surged by almost 7,000 students.
- The legislature suspended all funding for I-728, which provided class size reduction money to districts.
- Gone also is I-732, which guaranteed an annual cost-of-living adjustment for school employees.
- Salaries for teachers were cut an equivalent of 6.4 days over the past several years.
- Health benefits have been frozen for teachers, despite increases in medical premiums.
- The legislature “hijacked” federal funding for education jobs, keeping the money intended to go directly to local school districts.
- The legislature cut almost \$2.5 billion from public schools during the last three legislative sessions.

The governor and your legislators need to hear your opinion on how the state budget should be balanced.

You can easily contact your elected state officials by going to:

[www.ourvoicewashintonea.org](http://www.ourvoicewashintonea.org)

\*Use your home computer

**Do It TODAY!**