

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
39th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
DAN KRISTIANSEN
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



March 25, 2015

Hand-Delivered

The Honorable Frank Chopp, Speaker
Legislative Building, Room 339

Re: Timing of Budgets – Public Participation

Dear Speaker Chopp:

The purpose of this letter is to thank you for sharing with us your expected timetable for publicizing, hearing, and passing the various budgets the Legislature must adopt this Session, but also to express concern over a few of the timelines you have set forth.

In particular, we are concerned that what most people would consider the main budget—the operating budget—is being made public sometime around mid-day this coming Friday, March 27. Just hours later, it appears that there will be a public hearing on this same budget in the House Appropriations Committee.

While we are sympathetic to the need to adopt a budget and complete our business within the 105 days allotted for the current Session, we are troubled that the public will effectively have no time to read, review, testify, or otherwise weigh-in with their representatives on the operating budget under your current schedule. It may be possible for certain lobbyists to prepare for the hearing on Friday, but the average citizen is unlikely to even be aware of the budget's release—let alone obtain copies and make plans to testify—until long after the public hearing has already taken place.

We are sure you would agree that public participation is a crucial part of our legislative process, and it is especially critical when we are dealing with complex fiscal matters involving lengthy spending provisions and complicated revenue explanations (and possibly even new taxes). In order to increase the public's ability to participate in the process and also accommodate your proposed timeline, we respectfully request that you make the budget available the day before the public hearing—that is, we would ask for the budget to be publicly released and available no later than Thursday afternoon (March 26th), not just a few hours before the hearing on Friday. We are confident that doing so should in no way affect our shared goal of completing our work in the 105 days provided for Session.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation on this matter. We remain open to discussions as to any way to accommodate both our limited Session timetable and the need to maximize the public's participation in the process.

Sincerely,

THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS LEADERSHIP TEAM

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