



Washington State Legislature

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor
State of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are writing to ask you to schedule and convene a special session of the Legislature. It is clear to us that executive mandates are no longer enough to address the devastation facing Washingtonians related to COVID-19. We have looked at the data and listened to the cries for help from the people who have been put in desperate situations through no fault of their own – unable to pay bills because they were forced out of jobs and cannot even rely on promises of unemployment benefits. We have concluded it is now the people’s turn to speak through their elected representatives, who must come together and govern as only the Legislature can.

In mid-March, just prior to adjourning as the state constitution requires, the Legislature took unprecedented action to set aside dedicated funding for the public-health emergency caused by COVID-19. We gave you the resources to help lead us through this challenge. Some ten weeks later, the original goal of “flattening the curve” has been realized, and Washington’s hospitals have not been overwhelmed. The fact that you are allowing an increasing number of counties to reopen signals that the public-health situation has evolved in a positive direction. Unfortunately, there is now an additional emergency at hand. While public-health concerns remain, our state faces an unprecedented economic crisis and a daunting budget problem stemming from the actions taken to protect public health.

We believe state government has an interest in protecting not only the lives but the livelihoods of Washingtonians. We also recognize the importance of minimizing threats to the services and programs that are important to so many people, especially the most vulnerable residents of our state. It is therefore essential for the legislative branch to meet in a special session and intervene, using the policy and fiscal authority granted under the constitution. For budgetary reasons, it would be most effective to begin a special session as soon as possible.

Our state government works best when all branches work together. The legislative branch, as a whole, has remained on the sidelines while you exercised your emergency authority. It is time for that to change. Our caucuses stand ready to continue working with your office and the executive branch in responding to this pandemic. We have no question, however, that the Legislature must now have a formal role in guiding our state's recovery. To that end we have proposed a framework and guidelines for a special session and encourage you to consider them. We want to work collaboratively with you and our majority colleagues in the Legislature to craft legislative solutions to help Washingtonians who are dealing with both the pandemic and economic desperation.

Sincerely,

Senator Mark Schoesler
9th Legislative District
R-Ritzville

Senator Randi Becker
2nd Legislative District
R-Olympia

Senator Shelly Short
7th Legislative District
R-Addy

Senator Ann Rivers
18th Legislative District
R-La Center

Senator Sharon Brown
8th Legislative District
R-Tri-Cities

Senator Judy Warnick
13th Legislative District
R-Moses Lake

Senator Brad Hawkins
12th Legislative District
R-East Wenatchee

Senator Muzzall
10th Legislative District
R-Whidbey Island

Senator John Braun
20th Legislative District
R-Centralia

Senator Tim Sheldon
35th Legislative District
D-Potlatch

Senator Curtis King
14th Legislative District
R-Yakima

Senator Keith Wagoner
39th Legislative District
R-Sedro Wooley

Senator Maureen Walsh
16th Legislative District
R-Walla Walla

Senator Hans Zeiger
25th Legislative District
R-Puyallup

Senator Jeff Holy
6th Legislative District
R-Spokane

Senator Jim Honeyford
15th Legislative District
R-Sunnyside

Senator Lynda Wilson
17th Legislative District
R-Vancouver

Senator Steve O'Ban
28th Legislative District
R-Pierce County

Rep. J.T. Wilcox
2nd Legislative District
R-Yelm

Rep. Joel Kretz
7th Legislative District
R-Wauconda

Rep. Paul Harris
17th Legislative District
R-Vancouver

Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber
7th Legislative District
R-Republic

Rep. Dan Griffey
35th Legislative District
R-Allyn

Rep. Gina Mosbrucker
14th Legislative District
R-Goldendale

Rep. Drew MacEwen
35th Legislative District
R-Union

Rep. Jenny Graham
6th Legislative District
R-Spokane

Rep. Matt Boehnke
8th Legislative District
R-Kennewick

Rep. Keith Goehner
12th Legislative District
R-Dryden

Rep. Tom Dent
13th Legislative District
R-Moses Lake

Rep. Jeremie Dufault
15th Legislative District
R-Selah

Rep. Ed Orcutt
20th Legislative District
R-Kalama

Rep. Carolyn Eslick
39th Legislative District
R-Sultan

Rep. Brandon Vick
18th Legislative District
R-Vancouver

Rep. Chris Gildon
25th Legislative District
R-Puyallup

Rep. Bill Jenkin
16th Legislative District
R-Prosser

Rep. Andrew Barkis
2nd Legislative District
R-Olympia

Rep. Mary Dye
9th Legislative District
R-Pomeroy

Rep. Mike Steele
12th Legislative District
R-Chelan

Rep. Chris Corry
14th Legislative District
R-Yakima

Rep. Larry Hoff
18th Legislative District
R-Vancouver

Rep. Michelle Caldier
26th Legislative District
R-Port Orchard

Rep. Robert Sutherland
39th Legislative District
R-Granite Falls

Rep. Skyler Rude
16th Legislative District
R-Walla Walla

Rep. Mike Volz
6th Legislative District
R-Spokane

Rep. Kelly Chambers
25th Legislative District
R-Puyallup

Rep. Brad Klippert
8th Legislative District
R-Kennewick

Rep. Norma Smith
10th Legislative District
R-Clinton

Rep. Alex Ybarra
13th Legislative District
R-Quincy

Rep. Bruce Chandler
15th Legislative District
R-Granger

Rep. Jim Walsh
19th Legislative District
R-Aberdeen

Rep. Drew Stokesbary
31st Legislative District
R-Auburn

Rep. Luanne Van Werven
42nd Legislative District
R-Lynden

Rep. Jesse Young
26th Legislative District
R-Gig Harbor

Rep. Joe Schmick
9th Legislative District
R-Colfax