

Speeches and Correspondence

An overview of reform measures given to the Associated General Contractors for their industry publication in 1973. Courtesy of Leonard Sawyer.

ARTICLE FOR THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTOR'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

August 22, 1973

BY: Leonard A. Sawyer, Speaker of the House
House of Representatives
State of Washington

Much has been said and written about the new plan for legislative reform initiated by the Democratic Caucus and begun during our last session here in Washington State. Our plan for continuing sessions was born out of a desire to rid ourselves of an antiquated, insulated system and have in its place one which could much more readily allow us to meet the needs of our constituents. Our goal in planning our revisions was to preserve the concept of a part-time citizen legislature, to make our committees more effectual, and generally to allow the legislative branch to be more responsive to the desires of citizens. Specific objectives included governmental spending reform, tax reform and a more responsive and effective administration of governmental programs.

The Pacific Northwest, and Washington in particular, has grown and changed dramatically in the last several decades. As our society became larger and more complex our law-making responsibilities increased proportionately. But, for eighty-four years, the legislative processes were not significantly changed. Inevitably, the legislative branch was weakened while the executive branch gradually usurped the balance of power. In order to fulfill its responsibilities as a viable component of the check and balance system the legislative branch had to be revitalized and strengthened.

The importance of retaining a citizen legislature is readily apparent in these times of turbulent politics. Many states which have adopted a full-time professional legislature now regret it. The shift from a citizen legislature to a professional one is often accompanied by a drift away from the close "grass roots" contact which provides the greatest opportunity for all citizens to participate in governmental decisions and directions. Our reform plan calls for intermittent sessions and committee meetings in Olympia, while allowing ample time for lawmakers to return to their home districts. This way legislators can follow their chosen professions, actively participate in community affairs and receive input from local citizens.

When the legislature adjourned on April 16, 1973, it did so earlier than in any regular session in the past ten years. This was possible due to increased efficiency, greater coordination between the House and Senate, and more efficient committee structure. Specifically, we established identical and coordinated committees in the House and Senate, continuation throughout the biennium of standing committees (formerly different interim committees were set up) and the replacement of interim committee staff with permanent non-partisan research technicians assigned to assist all committees. These changes will result in the best use of the sessions planned for September and January.

Spending reform was an integral part of our plan for legislative improvement. Performance audits will now be regularly conducted to determine if appropriations are spent according to legislative intent and with the greatest possible efficiency.

Last session our reform plan paid off and many important pieces of legislation in the areas of labor, legal rights, consumer protection, education, and health care were approved. We now have had several monthly weekend committee meetings. These, too, appear to have been very productive. The bills we studied and discussed in these hearings are still "alive" for action during the September and January sessions. Several controversial and complex measures are nearing resolution as a result of the increased time for research and study.

"A powerful and independent, creative and competent legislature distinguishes a democratic system for more authoritarian forms of government."

So states Larry Margolis, Executive Director of the Citizen's Conference on State Legislatures, in their publication The Sometimes Governments. Increasing the effectiveness and strength of the legislative branch in order to more adequately serve the needs of the people was our priority. In implementing the reforms in the legislative process last session, we are well on our way toward establishing an inquiring legislature, finally capable of challenging administrative proposals, actions and expenditures. This will result in better government for all of the people.

(Article for the Associated
General Contractor's Quarterly Magazine)
August 22, 1973

Text of speech given to State Democratic Convention in 1974, describing the achievements of the reform program.

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Post Office Box 2581

Olympia, Washington 98507

August 12, 1974

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FROM: LEONARD A. SAWYER

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William J. S. "Bill" May
Geraldine McCormick
Charles Moon
Frances North
Mike Parker
Robert Randall
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Rick Smith
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Georgette Valle
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Al Williams
Shirley Winsley
Lorraine Wojahn

Enclosed is a copy of the speech I gave before the Democratic Convention in Richland earlier this summer.

As we prepare to fully "gear up" for the 1974 campaign, I think it is important to recall the message I tried to convey to the delegates from our caucus.

This should be a good year for the Democrats -- not because of the troubles the Republicans have managed to get into, but because we have done a better job for the people.

We have shown that legislative reform can work, that by revising and streamlining our procedures we can deal more effectively and knowledgeably with the critical problems that confront our state.

This legislature has accomplished more, in less time, without increasing the cost of our operations. We have been able to do this by ironing out our differences in the caucus and coming out to work hard on a united program.

We can be proud of our achievements, and I am confident that by presenting our record and program to the people as united Democrats, we will have an overwhelming victory this fall.

SPEAKER SAWYER'S ADDRESS TO THE
STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION JUNE 29, 1974

It is a pleasure to talk to a Democratic convention today, because these are strange political times--times that I don't think even Ripley would believe.

When the people cry out for honesty in government, what does our Republican Governor suggest? He wants to give amnesty to the president, rather than a complete and honest disclosure.

When the people cry out for better public servants, what do a dozen Republican legislators do? Instead of making the system work they quit, complaining that being a legislator is too much work.

When the people cry out for more responsible institutions, what does the Republican party do? Instead of making reform work, they want to abolish reform and turn back the clock.

I hear that when the Republicans hire a secretary nowadays, they test her to see if she can erase 120 words per minute.

That's what I call really moving backwards.

Well, with the Republicans doing and saying what they are, it should be a pretty good year for the Democrats. This convention must plan for that victory.

We must set an example. Let's iron out our differences here today and leave this convention united and together. Let's all be moderate and wise with each other.

Now, I hope that this convention will forget the name calling. Let us unite for the people's sake. In the Democratic Caucus in the House of Representatives, we have liberals and we have conservatives. We fight in our caucus, but we unite on a program and then we come out and we work hard to push that program through, and that is why we have been an effective legislature.

Now, I would like to say just a few words about legislative reform, and go over some of the Republican criticisms because I am extremely disappointed that they would rather quit than fight to make a strong, independent and effective legislature.

These critics seem to be taking the advice of an old law professor who once said: "When arguing a case, if you have the facts on your side, hammer them into the jury--if you have the law on your side, hammer it into the judge--but if you have neither the facts or the law, hammer the table."

The critics of legislative reform don't know the facts, don't understand the meaning of our constitution and don't care about the interests of the people. They are just hammering the table for the benefit of the press.

It is true that legislators are underpaid. It is true that the legislature means hard work, but the people must be served and not neglected. Turning back the clock is not the answer. We well know that the Republicans are used to being paid a lot of money for little work, but we Democrats are used to working very hard for little pay.

But, I have to say that taking care of the peoples' business is a time consuming and difficult matter, and as the budget of the state grows, so do our responsibilities.

In spite of the fact that the critics apparently want our legislature to meet less often, spend less time, work less, hold fewer meetings and give the people less chance to participate and study the problems, the constitution of this state and every state spells out an equal partnership between the branches of government. That is the law.

When one branch has too much power, the people suffer. Without reform the legislature cannot perform its constitutional duties. With reform we can. But it takes hard work and much time. The danger of an executive with too much power is a great danger, and we can all thank one man for making this issue perfectly clear.

The interests of the people of Washington are best served by a modern-day legislature and the 43rd Legislature moved toward that goal by instituting a number of structural and procedural reforms.

We now have flexible sessions which allow us to take the peoples' problems as they occur. Problems and decisions don't wait until January of every odd year. Every month of every year the federal government hands down a bill, an appropriation, or an executive order that affects the people of this state. It requires the legislature to make policy decisions.

Committee weekends may be inconvenient for the legislator, but they are vital to the people. These meetings allow us to carefully consider legislation and to hear the opinions of the citizens at a time when people are calling for more participation--the Republican critics want to close the door.

Instead of 29 joint interim committees, as well as 18 Senate and 16 House committees, we now have 17 permanent standing committees in each house. Their responsibilities are clear. Their members are not shuffled every two years. They can study problems and be accessible to the citizens the year around. But the Republican critics want to return to the old, ineffective system.

We now have permanent professional staff. Not only do they support -- committee work during the sessions, but they research and study long-range issues for legislative action. Are the critics so well informed that they don't need information and research?

What has this reform cost the tax-payers? It has cost the taxpayer nothing, and in fact it has cost the taxpayer less. While passing more bills and studying more problems, the 43rd Legislative Budget will cost less than the 42nd Legislative Budget. The 43rd Legislature has already reverted \$1 million to the General Fund, and reduced its budget 8 percent. What other branch of government is spending less?

However, reform has demanded the time of each legislator. Maybe that is the heart of the critics' complaint--too much work. Well, there can be no place in Olympia for legislative loafers. And I say to the Republican quitters, if the shoe fits, wear it.

As I hear their departure speeches, I wish they had taken the advice of James Russell Lowell, who said over 100 years ago: "Blessed are they who have nothing to say and cannot be persuaded to say it."

Instead of quitting, they should have helped to make reform work. We are just beginning to shape a modern legislature. It will take time; we need to experiment. No one has all the answers despite what the Governor says.

But we will not turn back the clock. We cannot afford to. I hope that I can count on the Democratic Party of this state to agree with me on that.

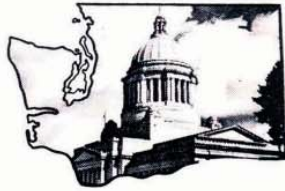
Letter sent to Governor Evans with suggestions for reform of budget procedures that would strengthen the position of the Legislature.

**FORTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
1971-73**

SESSIONS SERVED:
HOUSE: 1950 EX., '51, '51 EX.,
1951 2ND EX., '53, '53 EX.,
1955, '55 EX., '57, '59,
1959 EX., '61, '61 EX.
SENATE: 1963, '63 EX., '65, '65 EX.,
1967, '67 EX., '69, '70 EX.,
1971, '71 EX., '72 EX.

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TRANSPORTATION
WAYS AND MEANS
(REVENUE AND TAXATION)



SENATOR
AUGUST P. MARDESICH
THIRTY-EIGHTH DISTRICT
4712 MERMONT DRIVE
EVERETT, WASHINGTON 98201

Washington State Senate

November 28, 1972

The Honorable Daniel J. Evans
Governor of Washington
Legislative Building
Olympia, Washington 98504

Dear Governor Evans:

For the past several years one of the primary problems encountered by the Legislature has involved a review and analysis of the executive budget. Under normal circumstances the Legislature must wait three to four weeks from the date of its submission until analytical information becomes available to the various appropriation committees. In no small measure, the delay in the transmittal of budgetary information has substantially delayed and complicated the entire legislative process. As you are well aware, the complexity of state programs has increased from biennia to biennia. Coupled with the increasing complexity has been the changing nature of federal programs which has substantially complicated the Legislature's attempt to understand the various budgetary aspects and ramifications.

While we can understand the necessity for confidentiality of budgetary information and, thus, the reluctance of the Executive Branch to transmit such information prior to the convening of the Legislature, it is also apparent that a continuation of this policy will result in needlessly elongated legislative sessions. We would, therefore, like to respectfully request that the executive budget document be transmitted to the Legislative Budget Committee upon the date of its completion or at such time as the final budgetary decisions are made rather than waiting until the convening of the legislative session. It is our understanding that this procedure would place the budget document for all practical purposes in the possession of the Legislative Budget Committee from two to three weeks prior to the convening of the legislative session.

The Honorable Daniel J. Evans
November 28, 1972
Page Two

In turn, we would offer our assurances that the information contained in the budget document would be regarded as strictly confidential and would be available only to the Legislative Budget Committee staff. Further, it would not be released to any member of the Legislature or the public until the day after the budget message is delivered to the Legislature.

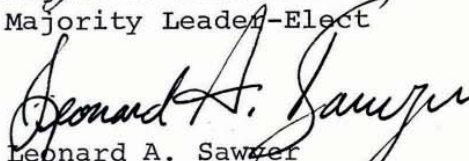
Our primary interest in making this proposal is to expedite the business of the session and assure that meaningful rational, and useful budgetary hearings can begin on the date the session commences. This would hopefully be a way of possibly shortening the time needed to successfully complete our budgetary deliberations and, in turn, the legislative session.

We look forward to your response to our request.

Respectfully submitted:



August P. Mardesich
Majority Leader-Elect



Leonard A. Sawyer
Speaker of the House-Elect

APM:LAS:dv