

## **A budget is about much more than dollars -- continued**

If you compare the proposed House and Senate budgets (and be thankful that you have folks to do that for you!) you can see that they reflect different priorities and different impacts on our state. They reflect different values. Those values are expressed by what programs are considered important enough to fund - do we as a state value healthcare, mental health, and support for needy families and the homeless?

Everyone will tell you that they value education, but the true value we place on it is demonstrated not by the lip service that we give it but by the funding we provide.

Those values are also expressed by who or what is chosen as the source of the needed revenue. Do we want those struggling the most to feed and support their families to pay the highest ratio of taxes? Do we want additional support from those who receive huge profits from speculating on Wall Street or from owning companies that pollute our air and contribute to global warming?

Though not recognized as "expenditures," tax exemptions reflect our values as well, providing incentives for certain choices. We can encourage the move to renewable energy through an exception. But we can also encourage -or discourage - buying and disposing of plastic water bottles with one too.

What do huge exemptions for large corporations say about values, if those exemptions do not benefit the general public? What values are reflected in charging sales tax on sports equipment for children, but providing an exemption for materials used by gun enthusiasts?

The final budget should reflect the values of the people of Washington. Will it?

That is where you come in. The only way we will have a budget that is consistent with our values is if we make those values heard - loud and clear. If you have been hesitant to talk to your legislators about the budget because you don't know all the numbers and dollar figures, that is okay. You do not need to talk about dollars and tax code revisions. Instead, talk about values: your values and what you believe the values of Washington should reflect.

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