

Unprecedented time to review House budget

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Today was going to be like just any other budget rollout day in Olympia. A short press conference highlighting a summary of a budget proposal running hundreds of pages long and spending billions of dollars (not to mention potential new tax increases being proposed). Then just a few hours later Washingtonians were to be expected to have read, digested, and traveled to Olympia to offer public testimony on the proposed spending plan for their tax dollars. This facade of budget transparency and public testimony would have allowed a box to be checked for involving the citizens and then permit the budget debate to move forward.



While this was going to be the plan for today something amazing happened last night that could be a precedent setting game changer for budget debates moving forward. The Speaker of the House agreed that a few hours wasn't enough time for meaningful public review to inform testimony and moved the public hearing on the budget for three days later.

This decision came after a March 25 letter from House GOP leadership to Speaker Chopp requesting more time for citizens to review the budget proposal before a public hearing.

Last year the Senate released its budget a day before the planned public hearing. We now have the House agreeing to provide the public three days to review its proposed spending plan before taking testimony. A major budget transparency threshold has now been crossed. Hopefully there is no going back to the days of public hearings on budgets still hot off the printer and the new standard will be to provide the public multiple days to review budgets being proposed on their behalf spending their hard earned tax dollars (and sometimes requesting even more).

Many thanks to House GOP leadership for making the request, House Democrat leadership for agreeing to extend time for public review and Senate MCC leadership for setting the precedent last year to provide at least a day between budget release and public hearing.

As for the actual details of the House 2015-17 budget proposal, check here at 11:30 this morning.