

**STATE OF WASHINGTON;
SECOND MESSAGE OF
GOVERNOR
ERNEST LISTER TO THE
FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE 1915**

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State of Washington; Second Message of Governor Ernest Lister to the Fourteenth Legislature
1915 by Various

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VARIOUS

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STATE OF WASHINGTON

Second Message
of
Governor Ernest Lister
to the
Fourteenth Legislature
1915



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1915

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STATE OF WASHINGTON.
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT.

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, January 12, 1915.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:

The Constitution of the State of Washington provides that the Governor: "shall communicate at every session by message to the Legislature the condition of the affairs of the state, and recommend such measures as he shall deem expedient for their action." Complying with this provision of the Constitution, I have the honor now to submit to you, the members of the Fourteenth Legislature, a partial history of the condition of the state's affairs at the present time and also to present my views covering needed legislation.

FINANCES.

The following is a statement of the moneys received by me as Governor and transmitted to the State Treasurer, from January 15th, 1913, up to and including December 31st, 1914:

| | | |
|---|--------------|------------|
| Notary fees from 2,247 applicants..... | \$22,470 00 | |
| Commissioner of Deed fees from 3 applicants..... | 15 00 | |
| From Federal Government as National aid to | | |
| Soldiers' Home, Orting..... | \$59,818 49 | |
| Veterans' Home, Port Orchard..... | 48,088 36 | 107,906 85 |
| From Federal Government on 5% refund of sales of Public Lands | 1,804 75 | |
| From Federal Government for refund on Forest Reserves Revenue | 68,747 23 | |
| From States requiring extradition fees of other states..... | 189 00 | |
| From W. G. Murray, certified copy of notary public commission | \$1 00 | |
| From George Everett, witness fees in case of State vs. Peter Miller..... | 23 00 | |
| From Sheriff of Yakima county as refund extradi- tion expenses in case of State vs. Peter Archart. | 101 90 | |
| From M. E. Hay..... | 5 00 | 130 90 |
| Total..... | \$201,243 73 | |

I also had on hand on December 31st, 1914, a balance of \$2,614.50 in two of the Military funds of the State, which are handed by this department.

On January 15, 1913, the day I assumed office, there was an overdraft of \$450,555.24 in the general fund. On March 14th of the same year, the day following the adjournment of the Thirteenth Legislature, the overdraft had reached the sum of \$719,837.51 and at the close of business on December 31st, 1913, it amounted to \$726,647.43. At the close of business on December 31st, 1914, there was a balance of \$400,016.37 in the general fund. These figures show that on January 1st, 1915, the fund was larger by \$850,571.61 than on January 15th, 1913, the day I became Governor.

On January 1st of this year there was on hand and invested in securities the following amounts belonging to the permanent funds of the state; the statement also shows the amounts on hand December 31st, 1913, the amount of bonds purchased during the two years and the bonds redeemed during the same period.

| | Balance December 31, 1913 | Purchased During Two Years | Redeemed During Two Years | Balance December 31, 1914 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Permanent School | \$3,700,000 02 | \$2,014,182 00 | \$366,475 00 | \$2,015,725 02 |
| University Permanent | 22,750 00 | 17,300 00 | 3,700 00 | 108,530 00 |
| Scientific Permanent | 247,600 00 | 115,200 00 | 24,000 00 | 338,200 00 |
| C., E., P. and B. L. Permanent | 271,970 00 | 30,700 00 | 29,650 00 | 312,920 00 |
| Agricultural Permanent | 172,535 00 | 102,300 00 | 27,010 00 | 248,215 00 |
| Normal Permanent | 154,400 00 | 88,010 00 | 23,800 00 | 229,410 00 |
| Total Bonds | \$9,665,211 02 | \$2,429,992 00 | \$976,035 00 | \$11,409,478 02 |
| Cash in the six funds..... | 505,701 41 | | | 334,172 88 |
| Total Bonds and Cash..... | \$10,220,918 53 | | | \$11,748,651 50 |

In recent years there has been an alarming increase in the cost of government. The state, counties, municipalities and in fact almost every taxing district in the State, have each year increased the amount called for from the taxpayers until the time has now arrived when further increase cannot but result in placing upon them a burden far beyond their ability to pay.

To meet the demands, property valuations in many instances have been fixed far above the revenue producing value of the property and taxing officers have been compelled to levy taxes to the fullest limit allowed by law. Even this has not resulted in producing sufficient revenue. The records show that bonds have been issued for county, municipal, school and other purposes amounting to over \$100,000,000.00, the interest charge on which is not less than \$5,000,000.00 per annum.

The time has arrived when more is required than the mere statement that expenditures will not be further increased. A plan of retrenchment must be decided upon; nor will the problem be solved by the issuance of further blocks of bonds so the taxes may be reduced and the burden placed upon those who may follow. Already we are paying annually in interest charges an amount so large that the likelihood of ability to pay off the bonds when they become due is indeed remote.

While much can be done by your honorable body by holding down state appropriations, yet the state expends but a small proportion of the total raised by taxation. Retrenchment must reach to every county, city and hamlet—to every taxing district in the State.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

It might, on first thought, appear that the Legislature by enacting into law certain measures, could bring about the reduction so greatly needed and desired by all. To some degree results could be obtained by such action upon your part. The tendency in recent years has been to steadily increase the number of offices. It would be a difficult task for a Legislative body to reduce the number to any great degree. It is equally true that we have certain elective offices that could well be abolished without in any way impairing the efficiency of the management of public affairs, regarding many of which, as a result of being provided for in the Constitution of the State, action on your

part would be impossible. While today the Supreme Court of the State is over-crowded with work and this is also true of some of the Superior Courts of the State, it is equally true that in many of the Superior Court districts there is not a sufficient amount of court work to occupy the time of the Judge or Judges in those districts. I believe a re-arrangement of the Superior Court districts of the state could be made and that the services of not less than ten Judges could be dispensed with and not in any way impair the efficiency of that Judicial department. The salary of a Superior Court Judge is \$9,000.00 per year. It is fair to presume that the other expenses incident to the court, such as bailiffs' salaries, etc., amount to as much as the salary of the Judge. Figuring on this basis \$60,000.00 per year could be saved in this one instance. I am sure that all agree that there is little probability of a Legislature passing a bill that would reduce the number of Superior Court Judges in the state to this extent. I also believe that many of the county offices could be abolished.

A great many people believe in the commission form of government for state and counties. Personally, I do not believe that a form of state government should be adopted that would place in the hands of the same officials legislative and administrative powers. I do believe, however, that better results would be obtained if we had one legislative body in the state consisting of say not to exceed twenty-five members, five elected from each congressional district which could be fixed as legislative districts and by fixing the time of each regular session of the Legislature at ninety instead of sixty days. I believe all will agree that a bill providing for this radical change, or for any reduction in the number of members in the Legislature, could not be passed at this or any other session of the Legislature. There is also great need for a constitutional amendment in relation to revenue and taxation, and without doubt, other con-

stitutional amendments will be suggested during the present session of the Legislature.

The Constitution of the State, in that section relating to constitutional conventions, reads as follows:

"Whenever two-thirds of the members elected to each branch of the Legislature shall deem it necessary to call a convention to revise or amend this constitution, they shall recommend to the electors to vote at the next general election for or against a convention; and if a majority of all of the electors voting at said election shall have voted for a convention, the Legislature shall at the next session provide by law for calling the same; and such convention shall consist of a number of members, not less than that of the most numerous branch of the Legislature."

It further provides that:

"Any constitution adopted by such convention shall have no validity until it has been submitted to and adopted by the people."

I believe the only method by which we can secure the radical changes necessary to bring about a marked reduction in public expenditures, and a simplification of the governmental machinery, will be by providing for a constitutional convention and would earnestly urge and recommend that your honorable body do that which is necessary on your part to bring this about.

In referring to this recommendation I have touched on but few of the matters that would enter into the work of a constitutional convention. The lines in which such a convention could assist in solving the problem before us are so numerous that it is possible to direct your attention to but few of them at this time.

Some may insist that the calling of a constitutional convention provides a method much too slow to secure the results needed. It is true that a new constitution probably could not be adopted before the general election held in 1918. The time which would be required to bring this about is no argument against the calling of a constitutional convention. It must be

done before we can secure the relief needed and the sooner action is taken providing for it, that much more quickly will the relief come.

DIRECT ELECTION OF UNITED STATES SENATORS.

Since the meeting of the Thirteenth Legislature, the method of election of United States Senators has been changed as a result of the ratification, by two thirds of the states, of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States providing for their election by direct vote of the people. The first United States Senator to be elected by a direct vote in our state was chosen at the last general election. For a time it appeared that it would be necessary to call the Legislature of the state together in special session for the purpose of providing by law the machinery necessary to comply with the amendment to the Constitution. After several months delay, a bill introduced in Congress by one of the members of the delegation from this State, was passed and approved by the President which made it possible to avoid calling the special session. I desire to call your attention to the necessity of legislative action to provide for the nomination and election of United States Senators at future elections.

PREFERENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY.

For some years prior to the adoption of the amendment to the Constitution of the United States, providing for the election of United States Senators by direct vote of the people, the voters of our State were allowed to give expression to their choice for United States Senator, under the provisions of our primary law. I believe the great majority of voters now desire to be allowed to express their choice of candidates for President, and I would respectfully recommend the enactment of a Preferential Presidential Primary Law.