

Washington

Senate Majority Leader puts down cap-and-trade plan

Washington governor says he expected 'heavy skepticism'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Senate Majority Leader Mark Schoesler opposes Gov. Jay Inslee's proposal to cut carbon emissions by taxing greenhouse gases.

"I think there are really strong concerns about the impact on jobs around the state," Schoesler said Jan. 8 at a forum hosted by The Associated Press at which legislative leaders and Inslee previewed the 2015 session.

Inslee has proposed capping the amount of greenhouse gases some 130 businesses, including food processors and one fertilizer manufacturer, can release. To



Courtesy photo

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's plan for a carbon tax is running into opposition in the Legislature.

emit any carbon at all, businesses on the list would have to bid for credits at auctions. The governor's office estimates the auctions would raise approximately \$1 billion a year.

Inslee says his policy, driv-

en by concern about climate change, would raise badly needed money for transportation projects and education.

Schoesler, a Ritzville Republican, said the state shouldn't rely on taxing carbon to permanently increase education spending.

"The goal is to reduce carbon output, so if we're successful, we're choking off our source of funding," he said.

Schoesler's opposition signaled that Inslee's proposal will have a tough time winning approval this year in the GOP-controlled Senate.

Speaking later at the same forum, Inslee said he had anticipated his cap-and-trade proposal would face "heavy skepticism."

Carbon markets have worked elsewhere, but it will take time to win over skeptics here, he said. "This is the nature of progress in a democracy."

Inslee said it makes sense for "polluters" to pay for education

and transportation, two pressing topics for lawmakers.

Democratic leaders said they would seriously consider Inslee's proposal, but stopped short of endorsing it.

"There's strong public support across the state for dealing with that issue, climate change," said House Speaker Frank Chopp, D-Seattle. "We can't ignore it. We have to deal with it."

Business and labor organizations, including the Washington Farm Bureau and Northwest Food Processors Association, have formed a group, the Washington Climate Collaborative, to oppose Inslee's proposal, which is modeled after California's cap-and-trade program.

The 105-day session convened Jan. 12, and lawmakers are being pushed to increase K-12 education spending. The state Supreme Court has ruled lawmakers have failed to adequately fund education, and voters in November passed an initiative mandating smaller class sizes.

Lawmakers also will be pressed to increase spending on mental health and transportation.

Besides taxing carbon, Inslee has proposed several other tax increases, including a 7 percent tax on capital gains over \$25,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for couples. Retirement accounts and the sale of farms and homes would be exempt from the tax.

Sakuma attorney: Piece-rate pay rewards pickers

Supreme Court to hear oral arguments March 17

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington growers' practice of not separately paying piece-rate pickers for rest breaks rewards good workers, according to a brief filed with the state Supreme Court by Sakuma Brothers Farms.

"Farmworkers return to Sakuma year after year because of high piece-rate wages that can far exceed minimum wages," the company's attorney, Adam Belzberg, states in written arguments submitted Jan. 9.

The Burlington, Wash., berry farm is being sued by piece-rate pickers seeking additional compensation for 10-minute rest breaks, which workers are allowed to take every four hours.

The workers argue that the current practice, standard in Washington agriculture, unfairly excludes piece-rate pickers from a benefit guaranteed other employees.

The high court agreed to consider the workers' claim and will hold oral arguments in

March.

The challenge to established practice emerged from a federal class-action lawsuit by Sakuma workers who alleged their pay was not properly calculated. The company denied any wrongdoing, but agreed to a \$500,000 settlement, which was eventually shared by 408 workers.

The settlement didn't resolve whether piece-rate workers are eligible for additional pay for the time they spend on break. A federal judge referred the question to the state court.

Sakuma's case relies heavily on a 1990 administrative rule written by the state Department of Labor and Industries, with the advice of farmers and labor representatives. The department considered additional break pay for piece-rate workers, but decided against it, according to a document submitted to the court.

Belzberg said in an interview that the rule clearly never intended for piece-rate workers to receive additional pay.

In written arguments, Belzberg stated that changing the rule would interfere with the historical right of workers to engage in piece-rate agreements with employers.

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Farmer and Odessa Public Development Authority President Clark Kagele stands outside the biodiesel facility in February 2013 in Odessa, Wash. The public development authority is again looking for an experienced biodiesel producer to take over operations at the facility.

Matthew Weaver/
Capital Press

Biodiesel plant owner looks for experienced operators

Proposals due Jan. 30

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The public development authority in Odessa, Wash., is still looking for a new operator for its biodiesel production facility.

Proposals are due to the Odessa Public Development Authority before 5 p.m. Jan. 30. The agency is looking for an experienced biodiesel pro-

ducer to resume production at the facility.

According to the OPDA request for proposals, the decision will be based on several factors, including experience, financial resources and plans for the facility.

"We have received a lot of inquiry; however, the last request for proposals did not produce a qualified tenant," said Stacey Rasmussen, manager for OPDA.

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Plateau LLC stopped production last fall at the facility due to poor market conditions.

The authority owns the building, land and equipment. The OPDA borrowed \$4.2 million from the state under the Energy Freedom program to build the facility. The outstanding balance due to the Washington State Department of Agriculture is roughly \$3.5 million, Rasmussen said.

Contact info@odessapda.com for more information.

Washington chooses Idaho official to lead wildlife agency

New hire spent more than 30 years with Idaho department



Courtesy photo

Jim Unsworth, deputy director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, has been picked to direct the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on Saturday picked Jim Unsworth, deputy director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, to head the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Unsworth, 57, will replace Phil Anderson, who announced in August he would leave the post.

The commission interviewed eight candidates in December and announced its decision at a meeting in Tumwater.

"After a thorough nationwide search, we're confident Jim is the right person to guide the department through the many challenges that lie ahead," the commission's chairwoman, Miranda Wecker, said in a written state-

ment. "His solid understanding of natural resource issues and strong leadership skills will be invaluable in the department's effort to manage and protect the fish and wildlife resources that are so important to the people of this state."

As director, Unsworth will report to the commission and manage a department with more than 1,600 employees and a biennial operating bud-

get of \$376 million. His annual salary will be \$146,500.

Unsworth has spent more than 30 years in wildlife management with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and has served as deputy director for the agency since 2008. He previously held several management positions for the department, including wildlife bureau chief and state big game manager.

Unsworth holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife management from the University of Idaho, a master's degree in fish and wildlife management from Montana State University and a doctorate in forestry, wildlife and range sciences from the University of Idaho.

"I'm thrilled at this opportunity," Unsworth said in a written statement. "I look forward to taking on the many exciting challenges that come with managing fish and wildlife in the state of Washington."

Unsworth and his wife, Michele, have four adult children. He is an avid hunter and angler.