

Hunger

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hunger, from a steady increase in kids qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches to rising demand at food banks around the state.

“Underneath the statistics there are a lot of empty refrigerators and parents who are skipping meals so that kids will get to eat,” Stone said.

Those refrigerators are being partially filled by the state’s food banks.

Northwest Harvest, which distributes

found that some of the hungriest counties in Washington are where most of the state’s food is being grown, in part because those areas tend to have the least number of summer food programs for kids, Stone said.

Washington state ranks 40th out of the 50 state for availability of summer food programs, but there’s some good news. Some progress is being made by individuals setting up new programs in parks and through school districts.

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— Linda Stone, food policy director for the Children’s Alliance

food across Washington, reports it has gone from distributing 17 million pounds of food to 26 million pounds to food banks and meal programs over the past four years, according to spokeswoman Andrea Flatley.

In 2008, people were visiting these food programs and food banks more than 500,000 times a month. So far in 2012, people are visiting food banks and meal programs that Northwest Harvest works with around 700,000 times a month, Flatley said.

State officials and nonprofit groups have

“Things are still tough out there,” Stone said. “The bright spots are the people who are trying to turn it around.”

In Sprague in north-central Washington, a local librarian started a new summer meal program. A new meal program in the small town of Fairfield, near Spokane, served about 1,000 meals this past summer. Auburn and Kent school districts transported lunches by school bus to the places where kids hang out during the summer.

Schools

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been working on a solution, say Rolfes and Rep. Gary Alexander, R-Olympia. Staff has been in touch with every committee member individually to discuss the report and will have a draft ready for discussion at a meeting next week, probably on Wednesday in the Seattle area, said Rep. Jaime Pedersen, D-Seattle.

Pedersen said there was never a question whether the committee would meet to discuss the report in a public way. He said this process has mirrored the usual way the Legislature does its work, with staff members preparing analyses and fiscal reports on bills before a committee meets to discuss them.

Everything else about the Legislature communicating directly with the Supreme Court is unique, acknowledged Pedersen, who is a lawyer with experience in constitutional issues.

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purse,” Pedersen said.

He said, however, that lawmakers were gratified that the Supreme Court decided to communicate directly with the Legislature, as they had requested, instead of assigning someone or some agency to be a go-between.

The report due Sept. 17 is the first of at least six the Supreme Court requested in its July ruling. The other reports are due 60 days after the governor signs the state budget each year.

After the Legislature files its reports, the coalition of school districts, parents, teachers and community groups who brought the lawsuit will have 30 days to file their own critique of the Legislature’s progress reports.

In Chief Justice Barbara Madsen’s July

order, she wrote that the Legislature’s reports must show “real and measurable” progress toward achieving full compliance with the Constitution.

The order also set a firm deadline of 2018 to fix the way the state pays for education in Washington.

Pedersen said he believes the Supreme Court could help lawmakers pay for that reform plan by coming to the correct conclusion when it considers another constitutional lawsuit, one considering whether it is unconstitutional to require lawmakers to have a two-thirds majority to raise taxes.

The Supreme Court has agreed to an expedited review of that case, brought by the League of Education Voters, the teacher’s union, parents, taxpayers and lawmakers. A hearing is scheduled for Sept. 25.

“They have an opportunity to play an important role in enforcing the constitution and allowing the Legislature to do its job in raising adequate revenue,” Pedersen said.

Gas

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drivers aged 16 to 34 drove 16 percent fewer miles than their same-aged counterparts in 2001. “In addition to high gas prices, social trends and new technologies have spurred younger Americans to rethink their driving habits,” said Williams-Derry. “Driver’s ed is more expensive, new licensing laws are more stringent, and the rise of digital media has partially replaced the need for a car.”

Increased vehicle efficiency has played a surprisingly small role in the decline of gasoline consumption. “Despite stricter federal standards and more customer interest in high-mpg cars, the real-world efficiency of

the nation’s vehicles improved only slightly over the last decade,” said Williams-Derry.

Demographic, economic, and political

Increased vehicle efficiency has played a surprisingly small role in the decline of gasoline consumption

trends point to further declines in gas use in

coming years. Today’s more-efficient vehicles will eventually penetrate the market; the average real-world fuel economy is pre-

dicted to rise to 26.7 miles per gallon by

2027, up from 20.5 mpg today. And as baby boomers continue to retire, a large segment of Northwesterners will leave their peak driving years behind.

These trends have major implications for state transportation policy. If Northwesterners continue to use less gas, state transportation agencies could face serious revenue shortfalls—and may be forced to reconsider their expensive plans to expand the region’s highway network.

Sightline Institute is the Northwest’s sustainability think tank, providing research, graphics, and commentary on the region’s most important trends.

Speaking Out Against Sexual Violence



Hundreds of people marched from Occidental Park to Westlake Park Sunday, Sept. 9 in the annual Slut Walk to bring attention to the shame still experienced by victims of sexual violence. Susan Fried photo