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STORMY WEATHER?



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Despite a forecast for continued sunshine, Seattle just missed breaking an over 60-year-old record for the longest dry spell in city history, when 0.01 of an inch of rain fell at Sea-Tac on Monday, Sept. 10. The current dry spell lasted 48 days missing the 1951 record by 3 days.

Hungry: 25 % of WA Kids

Washington is sixth highest in family food insecurity rates

By Donna Gordon Blankinship
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The abundance of summer fruits and vegetables filling Washington supermarkets are a colorful but ironic contrast to some new statistics coming out the U.S. Department of Agriculture this week that show hunger in the state has grown significantly since the recession started.

From 2008 to the end of 2011, the number of hungry families in Washington grew from about 88,000 to 163,000. Only six other states had hunger growth rates that were higher than Washington between 2010 and 2011, the USDA reported.

Hunger in Washington state is now above the national average, and worse than hunger levels in both Oregon and Idaho. In 2011, 15.4 percent of Washington households reported some level of food insecurity, which means they regularly struggle to get enough food for their families, according to the USDA.

About 6.2 percent of Washington residents reach a higher threshold and are considered hungry, which means they are going without some meals because there isn't enough money for food.

The national numbers are 14.9 percent for food insecurity and 5.7 percent for hunger.

The Children's Alliance, an advocacy group for children, youth and families, estimates that 440,000 children in Washington, or 25 percent, live in households where there's not enough food for everyone to eat.

The number of kids qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunches at Washington public schools has increased from about 390,000 kids in May 2008 to about 470,000 in May 2012, according to statistics from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The new numbers are not surprising to Linda Stone, food policy director for the Children's Alliance. Since 2007, the advocacy group has seen more evidence of

Court's School Funding Deadline

Sticking point: Should school fund meetings be public, or private?

By Donna Gordon Blankinship
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Washington lawmakers plan to argue right up until a Sept. 17 deadline about what they should tell the Supreme Court about how they'll fix the way the state pays for K-12 education.

In July, the court gave the Legislature two months to file its first report on what they were doing in answer to a January ruling that the state isn't meet-

ing its constitutional obligation to amply pay for basic education. In the past decade, education spending has gone from close to 50 percent to just above 40 percent of the state budget, despite the fact that some education spending is protected by the constitution.

State lawmakers have in recent years been dealing with large budget deficits, and earlier this year they cut \$300 million in state funding. The spending plan didn't include any cuts to education, but lawmakers will

continue to scramble to find money to pay for government services when they meet again in January.

All summer, various legislative committees focused on education have been meeting, but the one committee assigned by lawmakers to report back to the Supreme Court has yet to convene.

The Senate members of that committee wanted to meet at the end of August to talk about the report, but House members had legal concerns and declined to

meet, Sen. Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, told The Associated Press.

She said the debate came down to one issue: Was the assignment by the Supreme Court something the Legislature should deal with in a public committee? Or was it an issue of attorney-client privilege — and therefore the lawyers representing the Legislature should handle all communications with the court?

Committee members have

See **SCHOOLS** on page 3

See **HUNGER** on page 3

INDEX	
News	2,4
Calendar	2
Opinion	3
Bids/Classifieds	3

Northwest Gasoline Consumption Drops

New report shows despite less driving, money spent on gas is up

By The Sightline Institute

A new report shows our appetite for gasoline a waning. After more than a decade of rising and volatile prices at the gas pump, northwesterners' consumption of motor fuel is now on the decline. But high oil prices meant that the region still spent a record \$22 billion on petroleum in 2011.

Last year, each resident of Oregon and Washington burned an average of 7.2 gallons of gas per week—the lowest level in nearly 50 years. And per capita consumption has dropped even lower in 2012.

Total gasoline consumption in the two states hit a plateau in the late 1990s, and started to decline in 2008—mostly because northwesterners have been driving less. In 2011, Oregon and Washington residents

travelled 13 percent fewer miles per capita on state-owned roads than the peak year of 2002. "The high price of gas has taken a bite out of our driving," said Clark Williams-Derry, Research Director at Sightline Institute and principal author of the report.

Young Americans have led the way in cutting back on car travel. In 2009, employed

See **GAS** on page 3