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NEW MEMOIR



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Aaron Dixon signs his book, 'My People Are Rising: Memoir of a Black Panther Party Captain,' before speaking to a packed room, Sept. 18 at the Northwest African American Museum. Dixon was one of the co-founders of Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party.

State Schools Tax?

Supermajority rule attacked as barrier to education funding

By Donna Gordon Blankenship
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — State Rep. Jaime Pedersen has a message for the Washington state Supreme Court: You've told the Legislature to put more money into education, now give lawmakers the tools they need to make that happen.

The court is holding a hearing this week on a case Pederson says holds the key to whether the Legislature can properly respond to the court's earlier ruling on the inadequacy of Washington state's education spending.

In the tax lawsuit before the court this week, a coalition of lawmakers and education groups contend the two-thirds majority vote required in the Legislature for raising taxes or closing tax loopholes is unconstitutional.

A lower court agreed with their assertion against the supermajority and the state Supreme Court has expedited its consideration of the two-thirds requirement, which came about because of a series of citizen initiatives. Voters most recently approved the supermajority rule two years ago and initiative promoter Tim Eyman is asking the public to renew the measure in November.

The Washington Constitution requires a simple majority vote of the Legislature to approve most laws, but the supermajority or two-thirds vote has been the law for tax increases thanks mostly to Eyman's measures.

The state constitution cannot be changed through the initiative process; a vote of the Legislature is required.

That is at the heart of some of the arguments before the Supreme Court in this week's tax lawsuit. Briefs have been filed by several organizations, ranging from the League of Women Voters to the Association of Washington Business and the Freedom Foundation.

A somewhat unique aspect to this case is

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Lobbyists, Staff Aided Charity

Owen: No conflict of interest in lobbyists' donations to family charity

By Mike Baker
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — For years, Lt. Gov. Brad Owen made the nonprofit Strategies for Youth an extension of his official government duties, even as it paid his wife a salary.

Owen's office staff used taxpayer-funded time to help conduct the operations of the anti-bullying organization that he founded, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press under state public

records laws. The Democrat also worked with lobbyists to help raise money for the nonprofit.

It was an unusual nexus of work, personal and extracurricular life, especially since the nonprofit paid Owen's wife \$25,000 during the span of a few years. The organization also provided his family with benefits such as full-time use of a \$33,000 truck.

Owen says he's always been upfront about how he wanted to use his office as a vehicle for

outreach, with the help of the nonprofit. The charity would send him to schools where he would work with kids to combat bullying.

Todd Donovan, a professor of political science at Western Washington University, questioned whether office workers should be able to use their state time to work on behalf of a nonprofit — no matter who the nonprofit paid.

"You're essentially contributing state resources to the nonprofit," Donovan said.

Last year, an ethics panel determined that a Department of Corrections official may have violated ethics laws when she used state time and resources to further the agenda of three nonprofits, even though she gained no financial benefit and said the work was to benefit the department. That case is ongoing.

Records provide a glimpse into how the Owen nonprofit operated. In one case, his office staff worked in June 2010 to organize a fundraiser with the

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Youth Offenders Caught in Jail Break

Female guard was knocked out cold and locked in room by teens

By Phuong Le
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The teenage boys apparently planned their escape from the juvenile detention center in Washington state. Some had packed bags with them, and one boy even stuffed his bed to make it look like he was there, authorities said.

On Saturday night, when they were sup-

posed to be locked in their rooms at Echo Glen Children's Center in Snoqualmie, about 25 miles east of Seattle, six inmates knocked a staff member unconscious, locked her in a room and fled, authorities said.

They were captured a few hours later after a helicopter crew using thermal-imaging equipment spotted them in nearby woods early Sunday, according to the King County

Sheriff's Office.

"They basically attacked the staff member, knocked her out, took her keys and fled," Sgt. Cindi West said. The teens left the woman unconscious and locked in a room at the facility, she said.

All of the inmates should have been locked in their rooms by 11 p.m., but they

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