

Tax

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the inclusion of Gov. Chris Gregoire as a third party to the lawsuit, in which the attorney general's office, as the state's official lawyer, is charged with defending the two-thirds majority law.

The attorney general has argued this case is a premature challenge of the two-thirds rule because it hasn't stopped the Legislature from doing its work.

In her brief to the Supreme Court, Gregoire and her attorneys emphasize the necessity of a decisive statement by the court, to rescue her office and the Legislature from the budget limbo the initiatives have stuck them in. She speaks of the trouble she has had creating state budget proposals without the freedom to close tax loopholes or raise business fees.

Pedersen says life in state government has just gotten a whole lot harder, thanks to the Supreme Court's January decision on education funding, known as the McCleary case. The court's very specific ruling in the school spending lawsuit states that the Legislature has done a good job making plans to change the way the state pays for education, but it goes on to order lawmakers to find the money now to pay for it.

Most people agree the state needs between \$3 billion and \$4 billion to fulfill its constitutional promise to fully pay for basic education. One possible solution is to raise taxes, create a new dedicated tax, increase fees, or do some combination of these options.

The other possible solution, Pedersen says, is to "cut the heck out of everything else" the state spends money on: health care for the needy, disability payments, the state Ecology Department, state parks, state colleges and universities, student scholarships and the arts.

"I can't imagine how you could get 50 votes to do those things," let alone two-thirds of both chambers of the Legislature, he said.

He predicted the eventual outcome, if the Supreme Court does not give the Legislature back the power to raise taxes and close loopholes, would be a failure to answer the McCleary challenge.

Meanwhile, state Sen. Janea Holmquist Newbry, R-Moses Lake, has promised to propose a constitutional amendment to make the two-thirds vote permanent during this next legislative session.

50th Reunion



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Classmates and friends from Garfield High School class of 1962 celebrated their 50th reunion Sept. 22 at the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. Over a hundred classmates and friends spent the day reminiscing about their high school years on a cruise on Lake Washington before ending their day at the Performing Arts Center.

Owen

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theme of "Everyday People Doing Extraordinary Things."

An Owen aide made preparations through his office email to honor two lobbyists with awards during the charity dinner and auction held at Emerald Downs. Another lobbyist served as emcee. Through a fourth lobbyist, AT&T donated \$1,000 to reserve a table and a foursome at the accompanying golf tournament, according to documents obtained by the AP.

Owen, a Democrat who presides over the state Senate and is listed as the nonprofit's president, said he saw no conflict of interest in asking lobbyists to donate to his family's charity, or in having his staff use state time to work on the nonprofit's behalf.

"Our goal was to help kids. That's the goal of my office. That's the goal of the nonprofit," Owen said. "The goal wasn't to make money for Brad Owen or Linda Owen: If we were going to do that, we wouldn't have had the nonprofit and she would have been working for the private sector."

Linda Owen was the only person drawing a salary at Strategies for Youth, and her pay

accounted for roughly 10 percent of its expenditures.

Brad Owen's office and the charity signed an agreement to work together and share resources — a contract that Owen said was drafted with the aid of lawyers in the Senate.

In a press release issued through his public office, Owen announced last year that he and his wife were ending Strategies for Youth, in part because of costs and his other work.

Emails from within Owen's office show that staff spent time sending out fundraising solicitations and event coordination for the nonprofit. Two workers also spent more than 100 work hours at Strategies for Youth events in recent years.

Owen said staff didn't need to do that work after hours because the office and the nonprofit had created a formal partnership, and he said the charity actually helped defray costs in the office on work that would have otherwise been done with state resources.

Owen, currently seeking re-election

against Republican Bill Finkbeiner, initially said his staff did not do fundraising work from the office. After an AP reporter pointed out emails that indicated otherwise, he went to assess the correspondence and said one staff member may have made mistakes by conducting some fundraising activity at the office.

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Owen said "a number" of lobbyists contributed to the nonprofit or helped the charity get connected with the appropriate contacts within businesses such as Waste Management and Boeing. He said he knows lobbyists from his job as lieutenant governor, so they were a logical point of contact. "We got turned down by as many as we

got accepting," Owen said.

Joe Daniels, a lobbyist who has supported the nonprofit personally and through clients, said he thought the program was a good idea to help kids. He didn't see any conflict, noting that the lieutenant governor isn't typically pushing legislation.

"I don't see where I can get any benefit," Daniels said.

Owen has served as lieutenant governor since 1997 and chairs the Senate committee that determines which bills advance to the floor for possible vote.

One year, Daniels' client Holland America donated a seven-day cruise certificate for a Strategies for Youth auction. In 2009, government records show that Owen sought to get a similar donation for another fundraiser.

Strategies for Youth was never an efficient charity. Over the past five years, it averaged about \$56,000 in expenses, with less than half of that money going to program services, according to IRS filings.

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Jail

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somehow managed to get out, said David Griffith, who directs institution programs for the state Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration.

"The kids were supposed to be locked in their rooms. It may have been a procedural error, or the youth hid out and she (the staff member) didn't know where they were," Griffith said.

"It's very scary ... We'll investigate what went wrong, absolutely," he added, noting that the agency will address procedural changes if necessary.

He said the staff member was treated and is at home.

The teens were in a maximum-security unit of the juvenile correction facility, which currently houses about 165 youth offenders in 10 separate living units. The units include a small kitchen, living room and classroom.

"We're not sure how it was initiated. It might have been a single person, or a concerted effort," Griffith said. "The kids who assaulted the staff member opened the doors

Witnesses told detectives that the staff member was beaten with a chunk of ice frozen in a water bottle

for all kids living in the unit, so there was a potential for the entire unit to escape."

Six fled. Seven decided to stay and they notified security, Griffith said. The King County Sheriff's office said it received word of the escape at about 11:30 p.m. Saturday.

The unarmed staff member was alone in

the unit, which is typical after lockdown, Griffith said. She apparently wasn't able to push a panic button or call security for help, he said.

Witnesses told detectives that the staff member was beaten with a chunk of ice frozen in a water bottle, the Seattle Times reported.

"It definitely appears this was planned. The detective on the scene said when they found the boys they had their packed bags with them," West told the Times.

The six males, three 14-year-olds and three 15-year-olds, were serving time for offenses including assault, possession of firearms and burglary, West said.

Law officers on the ground with search dogs and in the air combed the area on the outskirts of Snoqualmie before a helicopter crew spotted them in woods near the center, according to West. All were captured by 2 a.m. Sunday.

Echo Glen Children's Center is a medium and maximum security facility for offenders serving time mostly for felony crimes. The facility is not fenced, but is bordered by natural wetlands. It provides treatment services for younger male offenders and is the main institution for female juvenile offenders, according to its website.

Once the teens were spotted by the helicopter, they split up into three groups and ran in different directions, West said. Deputies in the helicopter were able to direct deputies on the ground, including K-9 units, to where the teens were running or hiding.

One was bitten by a police dog while trying to escape and was taken to a hospital for treatment, West said. The others were arrested without incident and booked on charges of assault, unlawful imprisonment and escape, she said.

"There was no indication that this was coming up," Griffith said.