

THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



For The Skanner news alerts Text "NEWS" to 503-715-0890 or scan this QR code



PASSING THE BATON

Maxie Jamal practices West African dance during a class Saturday, Nov. 24, at Garfield Community Center. The class, taught by Adefua African Music and Dance, is working towards a spring show called "Passing the Baton" which will include drumming, vocals, hip hop, gospel and a variety of other disciplines.



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

State House Diversity

New legislature is least diverse group elected since 1992

SEATTLE (AP) — The Washington state Legislature that will gather in Olympia early next year will be the least diverse group of state lawmakers in a generation, mostly due to fewer women.

Even as the U.S. Congress is becoming more diverse, Washington's 63rd Legislature will include 44 women, or about 30 percent, among its 147 members — the fewest since 1990, The Seattle Times reported Sunday.

Overall, nearly two-thirds of the Legislature, or 95 lawmakers, will be white men — the most since 1992.

Depending on a too-close-to-call House race in Vancouver — where Democrat Monica Stonier, who identifies as Asian and Hispanic, holds a 100-vote lead — there may be just one Latino lawmaker, the lowest number since 1996, the newspaper reported.

There will also be two African Americans, two Native Americans, five Asian Americans and, for the first time, an Iranian American, according to the latest vote tallies. There will be six openly gay or lesbian members.

The dearth of diversity is particularly apparent in the Republican Party, whose legislative ranks next year include no minorities and either 16 or 17 women, the Times reported.

Lawmakers and advocates say there aren't more women and minorities in the Legislature for a number of reasons, including poor recruitment, low salaries, competing needs for women and the rancorous nature of politics being a turnoff.

"This doesn't happen overnight," Tim Ceis, a Democratic member of the Washington State Redistricting Commission, told The Times. He said increased minority representation will come, eventually. "It takes organizing. It takes candidate recruitment. It takes time."

The commission, which redrew district boundaries last year after the once-a-decade census, made increased minority representa-

Gregoire Takes On Web Retail

Online companies pay no sales tax--a loss of hundreds of millions

By Mike Baker
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Gov. Chris Gregoire's time in office may be best remembered for the major deals she helped broker, often in late-night bargaining sessions in which negotiators were ordered to find a resolution.

Now the Democrat, two months away from leaving Washington state government, is looking to finalize one more big agreement.

Over the past year, Gregoire has been working to build support for a congressional plan that would allow states to collect sales tax from online retailers based elsewhere. Similar efforts in Congress over the past decade have all failed, even as online sales have become more common.

Gregoire said the current lame-duck Congress is perhaps the best time to pass the measure, with some Republican governors and lawmakers signaling their support. She said the issue

is a matter of fairness, helping states collect taxes that are due and helping local businesses compete on a level playing field with online counterparts.

"I will tell you that our companies in this state are suffering mightily because of this fundamental unfairness," Gregoire said.

A deal would also provide Washington with hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues, helping deal with budget shortfalls in a state dependent on the sales tax.

Gregoire, who is working along with Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, believes any agreement will have to be part of larger negotiations to avoid the so-called "fiscal cliff" — in which a batch of tax increases and government spending cuts are set to take effect in the new year unless Congress acts. If Congress fails to reach agreement to that issue, she doesn't see a pathway for the online sales tax measure.

See TAX on page 3

See LAWMAKERS on page 3

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

County Sheriff to Close Cold-Case Unit

228 unsolved missing person and homicide cases still on books

SEATTLE (AP) — The King County sheriff's office is closing its cold-case unit at the end of the year, despite some notable successes, because the squad has run out of money.

The team was started in 2009 with money from a federal grant. The grant was renewed in 2011 and officials had hoped for another renewal this year, but that didn't happen, The Seattle Times reported in Friday's

newspaper.

Since its formation, the squad has identified suspects in at least eight slayings. Some cases resulted in convictions, some determined that the likely killer had died, and, in some, detectives are still coordinating with county prosecutors before the case goes to trial.

The county still has 228 unsolved missing person and homicide cases dating to the

1940s.

"Loss of the funding is a real blow, and it means some cases will likely go unsolved," said King County Sheriff-elect John Urquhart.

The unit did its best to stretch federal grant money, said Major Crimes Unit Sgt. Jesse Anderson. The Metropolitan King

See COLD CASE on page 3