

WA Taxpayers Asked to Sound Off on State Budget

Local News

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TACOMA, Wash. - Washingtonians are being asked to sound off about the state budget at a series of four hearings beginning tonight in Tacoma. You don't have to be an economist or a labor leader to add your two cents' worth - or, in this case, two minutes's worth - of testimony. Each meeting starts with a one-hour overview of the state budget. In the second hour, citizen comments will be taken.

Marty Brown, director of the governor's Office of Financial Management, says he knows the panel will hear a lot of complaints, but he hopes there are also some good ideas for navigating the budget crisis.

"We're going to get down to some very tough decisions about what to spend taxpayer dollars on and what not to. We need to hear from folks about what they think is important to receive from the state, from the taxpayer's perspective and from some people who receive those services."

According to Brown, the meetings are part of Gov. Chris Gregoire's plan to examine every state service and decide whether it's essential, whether it's being delivered cost-effectively and if it is getting the desired results.

Brown says these comments can influence what could be on the chopping block.

"We're going to have to end some services before this next budget is passed, so there are going to be fewer things that state government does. We need their guidance on what those things should be."

The governor's office is also adding a page to its website starting today for people to post their own comments.

Tonight's meeting is at 7 p.m. in Phillip Hall on the University of Washington Tacoma campus, 1900 Commerce St., Tacoma. On Wednesday night, a hearing will be held at Everett Community College,

Everett. Hearings are also scheduled the following week in Vancouver (July 27) and Spokane (July 29).