# *Predictions for WA's Special Legislative Session*

**Local News**

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Today, the State Capitol is as busy as department stores were on Black Friday, as lawmakers convene for a special session. The topic is how Washington will cope with its $2 billion budget shortfall. The choices are familiar: more cuts to state agencies and services, or revenue increases through higher taxes or closing tax loopholes.

Longtime lobbyist Lonnie Johns-Brown expects the session to last at least three weeks.

"I think it'll take that long. The House and Senate are both talking about how they want to approach this, but their approaches are not similar yet - and there's not enough votes in either chamber for any particular plan yet. It takes awhile for this sort of thing to come together."

Johns-Brown represents more than a dozen clients in Olympia. She says lawmakers are hearing plenty from constituents about the effects of the $10 billion they've already trimmed from the state budget.

"There's a lot of consensus, among both Democrats and Republicans, that we may be cutting too close to the bone now. And what people may think they need to have in terms of policy changes in order to vote for revenue is where I think we'll see the real differences."

She predicts the usual political posturing in this session, and says some bills may be introduced that are not budget-related, as part of deals made to get a new budget passed. Overall, she adds, lawmakers are as anxious to fix the shortfall as anyone else in the state.

"These are pretty stressful times. For the most part in Washington, we're lucky that our legislators try to approach this seriously, and they try not to draw too many lines in the sand too quickly."

Gov. Gregoire has proposed a temporary sales tax hike of one-half cent, which is already getting some pushback. Any tax hike or loophole closure requires a two-thirds majority in both House and Senate, or a statewide ballot measure. If any revenue measure comes to a public vote, Johns-Brown says it could be as early as February or March.