Incoming Senate Majority Leader, Senate Republican Leader encourage orderly transition to 2013 session

Local News

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Olympia, WA - Last week Democratic and Republican senators announced they have formed a Majority Coalition Caucus to lead the Senate during the 2013 legislative session. Twenty-five state senators committed themselves to a set of principles that will guide the work of the new caucus and announced an unprecedented committee structure with six committees led by Democrats, six led by Republicans and three co-chaired committees.Today incoming Senate Majority Leader Rodney Tom, D-Bellevue and Senate Republican Leader Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville issued this statement about their desire for an orderly transition to the new majority and committee structure:“Senator Murray has said repeatedly that in order for the Senate to function, someone has to be in charge. We agree, and as the new majority we are committed to moving forward with the Senate structure we believe best reflects the values of the people of our state.“We gave careful consideration to the committees and chairs that will be leading them. We trusted that issues like higher education, the environment, natural resources and economic development are as important to the Senate Democratic caucus as they are to ours, so we anticipated they would accept our offer of chairmanships on those committees. We also feel strongly that our unprecedented sharing of the 15 Senate policy committees – with six chaired by each caucus and three co-chaired committees – will facilitate collaboration and provide the most fair and equitable representation of people from every corner of our state. Some committees have had a long history of cooperation, and those are the ones we chose to be co-chaired. But to have co-chairs for every committee would be a recipe for gridlock, particularly in areas like education and the operating budget.“This is the time to put the people of Washington first rather than focus on politics. While we recognize Senate Democrats are technically in charge until the legislative session opens Jan. 14, there is a long-standing tradition that has the outgoing majority accommodate the new majority so a transition can get under way in the weeks before a session begins. It is our hope that the current majority will cooperate with us to ensure a smooth handoff of leadership and allow the Senate to tackle the many pressing needs of our state from day one of the 2013 session.“The majority coalition caucus remains committed to working in a collaborative, bipartisan fashion as we move into and through the 2013 legislative session.”