



# The Elway Poll

An independent  
nonpartisan  
analysis of  
public opinion  
trends in  
Washington and  
the Northwest

12 APRIL 2016

## Lobbyists Grades for 2016 Session Slightly Up Overall, But Down in Most Subjects

The legislature showed slight improvement overall compared to previous years, but declined in several key areas and seriously dropped the ball on public education. So said the 280 lobbyists who participated in the 2016 Elway Poll of the Third House.

Asked to give the recent session a letter grade “like they use in school,” the lobbyists gave the legislature an overall grade of “C-” which is the same as last year. The average was 1.78 on the 4.0 scale—up from 1.73 last year and the highest overall grade since 2011.

The overall grade does not reflect the grades for specific subject areas, however. Grades were lower this year than last year for 5 of the 8 subject areas.

Maybe the overall grade mostly reflected relief that the session is not still going on. When asked to name the most significant outcome of this session, the second most-volunteered response was “getting finished.”

The lowest grade was for the subject of K-12 education, which was also the biggest drop compared to last year. This year’s grade was “D+” down from “C+” last year. A 56% majority gave a grade of “D” or “F” for the work on education (*Details on p.2*).

As usual, the budget was the primary focus. Also as usual, the lobbyists liked the budget outcome much better than they liked the process.

- The final budget document was graded at C+ (2.13), with 76% giving it a “C” (satisfactory) or better. 38% gave the budget an “A” (5%) or “B” (33%) vs. 24% who gave it a “D” (24%) or “F” (6%).

- The budget process was a different story: it was graded “D+” (1.18), with 65% giving it a “D” or “F” compared to 8% giving it an “A” or “B”.

The budget was cited as the “most significant outcome” of the session, volunteered by 14% of respondents in an open-ended question.

The most widespread criticism of the session was the time it took to produce the budget: 22% volunteered that as the “most significant disappointment” of the session.

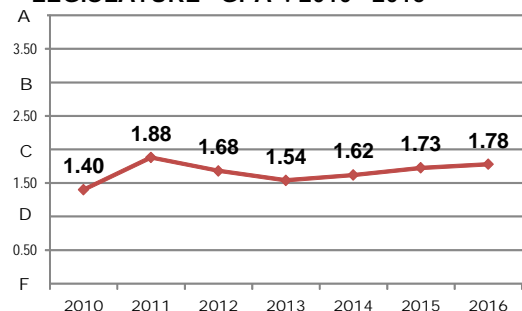
Lack of progress on the school funding issue contributed significantly to the evaluation of the session. Not only did K-12 education drop to a “D+” grade, but 17% volunteered that as the most significant disappointment of the session, and several respondents mentioned it in their closing comments at the end of the survey (*p.4*).



### 2016 LEGISLATURE REPORT CARD

OVERALL PERFORMANCE	C-
Transportation	C+
Public Safety	C
Higher Education	C
Health Care	C
Social/Human Services	C-
Environment/Nat. Resources	C-
The Economy	C-
K-12 Education	D+

### LEGISLATURE “GPA”: 2010–2016



## Grading the Players

The lobbyists were also asked to rate the overall performance of the caucuses and the Governor's office.

The House Republicans rose to the top of the class this year by not getting worse. Their grade of 2.12 was almost identical to the 2.13 they received last year. But whereas that grade put them in third place last year, it placed them at the top for this session.

Senate Republicans, House Democrats and Senate Democrats had virtually identical overall grades, although they differed in the proportions of "A" and "B" grades. Senate Republicans had the highest number of "As" and "Bs" (41%) while their Democrat counterparts had the fewest (27%) of the four caucuses.

Governor Inslee's performance rating was again the lowest of the "five corners." 68% of respondents graded him "D" or "F" compared to 13% "A" or "B" for an average of 1.11. Inslee's ratings have steadily declined over his term in office. His grade was 1.42 in his first session, dropped to 1.34 in 2014 and 2015.

The Governor's lowest grades came from business lobbyists, who gave him a "F" (0.62); his highest from lobbyists for public safety (C-; 1.85) and labor (D+; 1.49).

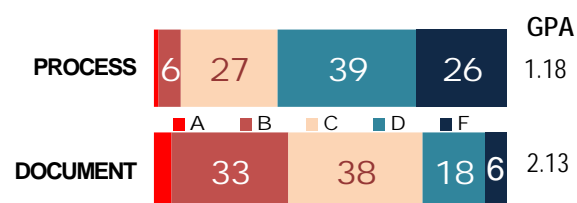
The longer a lobbyist had been around, the lower s/he graded the Governor. His overall grade was 1.62 (D+) among first-time lobbyists and declined steadily to 0.87 (D-) among those who had been lobbying for more than 20 years.

### Most significant outcome & disappointment of this session

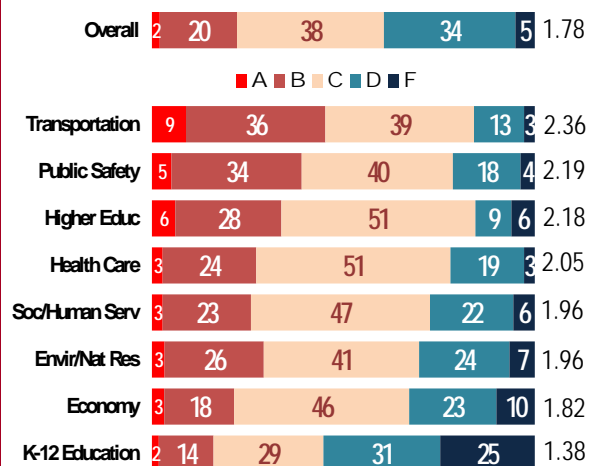
OUTCOME		DISAPPOINTMENT	
Budget	14%	Failure to Act/Duration	22%
Getting Finished	10%	McCleary	17%
Charter Schools	9%	Specific Legislation	11%
Lack of Action	9%	The 27 Vetoes	7%
Mental Health	8%	Budget Document	5%
No Tax Increase	5%	Partisan Polarization	4%
Specific Legislation	5%	No New Revenue	4%
Did No Harm	3%	Governor	4%
K-12 Funding	2%	Other K-12	4%
Wildfire Funding	2%	House Democrats	3%
Homeless	2%	No Leadership	2%
Transportation	1%	Senate Republicans	2%
		Budget Process	2%
		Climate/Enviro	1%
		Peterson Firing	1%

The questions were open-ended. Answers were coded into these categories.

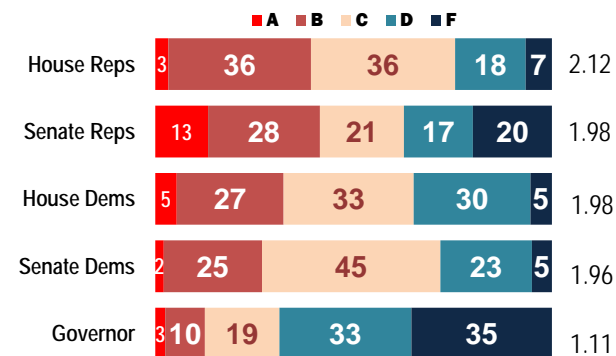
### GRADES FOR BUDGET PROCESS, OUTCOME



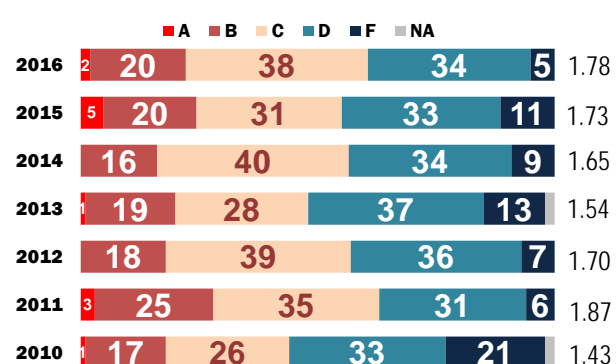
### 2016 GRADES BY PROGRAM AREA



### GRADING THE "5 CORNERS"



### LOBBYISTS GRADE THE SESSION 2010-2015



# Lobbyists See Inslee Re-election, Tighter Legislature

These lobbyists may not think much of Governor Inslee's performance, but they expect to be working with him for the next four and a half years. They predicted his re-election by nearly a 7:1 margin: 81% expected Inslee to win in November, compared to 12% for his Republican challenger, Bill Bryant. Some 5% thought another Democrat may yet enter the race and win, while 1% thought a new Republican challenger could win.

Expectations for Legislative races were mixed.

## • In the State Senate:

49% expected no change; while

35% thought the Democrats would gain seats, including

30% who expected the Democrats to gain seats; and

5% who thought the Democrats would win a majority there.

17% thought the Republicans would add to their majority.

## • In the House:

37% thought the Democrats would add to their majority;

45% expected Republicans to gain seats, including

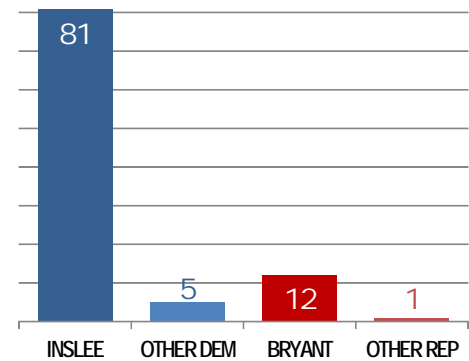
33% who expected a tie; and

12% who predicted an Republican majority; while

19% expected no change in the make-up of the House.

## Expectations for Election Outcomes

WHO WILL WIN  
RACE FOR  
GOVERNOR?



## Sample Profile

280 of 830 registered lobbyists completed this survey online. The table below presents a profile of those responding.

### ISSUE FOCUS [Multiple Answers Allowed]

Business .....	36%
Health Care .....	25%
Government / Public Sector .....	24%
Education .....	18%
Natural Resources / Environment .....	16%
Transportation .....	16%
Social/Human Services .....	15%
Labor .....	14%
Public Safety .....	8%
Other .....	8%

### INDEPENDENT OR EMPLOYED

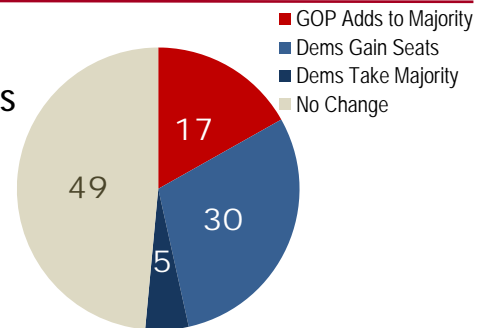
Independent / Contract Lobbyist .....	42%
Employed by Organization .....	56%
Citizen / Unpaid .....	1%

### TENURE

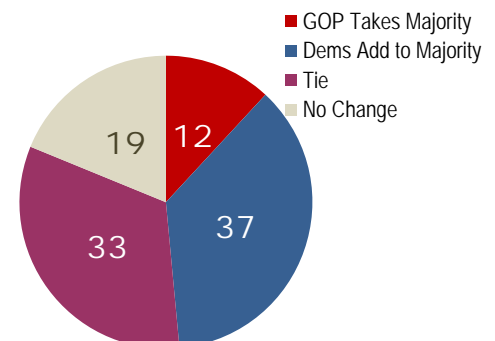
First Session .....	6%
2-5 years .....	29%
6-10 years .....	17%
11-20 years .....	19%
21+ years .....	28%

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### OUTCOME OF SENATE RACES



### OUTCOME OF HOUSE RACES



## The Good of the Order.

Lobbyists were given the opportunity to make any final comments about the session. This is a sampling of the unedited responses.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- *The bar was set low and the legislature didn't get over it.*
- *It felt like a pre-season game where the main issues were not on the field.*
- *A lot done in a short time. The flip side of that is a budget should have been prioritized and done on time.*
- *The best that can be said about the 64th Legislature is that it avoided any major tax increases and a flood of anti-business bills failed to pass. Sadly, little or no positive action occurred to bolster consumer or business confidence to help spur economic and job growth outside of the greater Seattle metropolitan area..*
- *Well, besides the drama of transgender bathrooms, the legislature did pay for emergent problems (wildfires and mental health) and left a lot of policy work for next year. For all the posturing, common for an election year, some work did get done.*
- *I went into the Session expecting nothing and was not disappointed.*
- *2016 was a predictable battle between competing philosophies in a divided government. Outcomes acceptable even if tactics were not especially the Governor's use of his veto authority*

### GOVERNOR

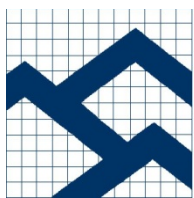
- *Though the Gov vetoes were superfluous, I appreciated the message about the normalcy special sessions have become.*
- *No governor should train the legislature to override his/her vetoes...*
- *the Gov's vetoes of 27 bills did nothing to motivate the groups to agree on a budget; it just further exasperated his relationship with both houses.*
- *The Governor still hasn't figured out how to use his power and has been made largely irrelevant in the legislative process. Which means the Senate and House are left to argue over very small items and are unable to make progress on the important issues facing the state.*
- *The biggest disappointment was Governor Inslee -- for the fourth year in a row -- demonstrating his disconnect from the legislative process. In the past, it was a very late demand for legislation (after cutoffs) or major policy announcement (death penalty suspension) not related to session. in 2016, he proclaimed his worry about legislators taking us within 24 hours of a government shutdown, even though the budget was passed and in place for the next 15 months. Inslee is the most uninformed and disengaged government we have had in the past 50 years.*
- *Governor comes late to the budget party...again! A consistent pattern of declaring "government shutdown" has occurred every year instead of an early & aggressive outreach effort with both parties & in the House & Senate.*

### EDUCATION

- *They continue to punt the K-12 conversation, and decisions that need to follow, forward. It is troubling the Senate Republicans have no plan, or even acknowledgement, that the McCleary decision is looming and looks to be a HUGE fiscal issue.*
- *Too much focus on education diversions. ie: Charter Schools*
- *The Legislature's continued refusal to comply with McCleary shows an incredible lack of leadership and ignores the needs of our state's 1.1 million students enrolled in K-12 public schools. Instead, they passed a charter school bill that diverts public funding to privately run schools that serve 1,100 students.*
- *Complete state of denial by all parties on education funding issues is deeply disturbing. It will be impossible to resolve core funding, the levy cliff and levy reform in one session in 2017. A disaster is pending.*
- *It amazes me that our state continues to pay the fines that it does, on a daily basis, because our (mostly) Republicans!! cannot fund Washington State education, c'mon guys, really?*

### PROCESS / PARTISANSHIP

- *This year has firmly established a new standard - as long as we have a divided Legislature, we are guaranteed special sessions.*
- *Senate Republicans have gotten smarter and more sophisticated in their strategy; Democrats in house and senate continue to compromise with themselves. Infuriating.*
- *Senate Republicans showed restraint.*
- *The Senate Republicans are clearly driving the policy and budget decisions. They need to identify a strong leader within their caucus on education issues before we head into the 2017 legislative session.*
- *Very poorly handled by the leaders of all four caucuses; the Senate R's got most everything they wanted, and gave up little to get them; the House D's caved on levy cliff;*
- *Senate Republicans were extremely divisive and partisan; spent too much time trying to demonize the Governor's administration*
- *Continued efforts by D's to increase taxes and spending despite historic increase in spending between 2013-2015 and 2015-2017 biennia*
- *What has been made clear by the protracted budget negotiation is that the 4-year budget outlook is now a dominant factor in negotiating the budget. This plays into the hands of the GOP. Democrats wanting to spend more on their political bases, social services and education, are hemmed in by having to pay attention to the balance sheet ...forecasts 3 and 4 years into the future. For Republicans, if the voter-approved expenditure limit enacted under Initiative 601 (based upon previous spending levels and inflation) was the Old Testament, now the 4-year budget outlook has become the New Testament of the Republican budget strategy.*



# The Elway Poll

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