

Every month since February 1987 the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence.

The Olympia FOR's program airs several times every week for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and more than 90 of our previous interview programs and special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the TV programs link to reach www.olympiafor.org/tv_programs.htm, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch.

Many of our website's TV program listings also include a .pdf document describing the program.

DECEMBER 2011

"WASHINGTON STATE NEEDS TAX REFORM"

by GLEN ANDERSON, PRODUCER AND HOST OF THIS TV SERIES

A few years ago the State of Washington experienced a budget crisis, so the Governor proposed drastic cuts, and the Legislature enacted drastic cuts. Then our state experienced another budget crisis, so the Governor and Legislature slashed again. Revenue keeps falling short of the needs, so they keep slashing and slashing. They have cut funding for state employees, state parks, K-12 education, higher education, health care, assistance for our poorest people, and pretty much everything.

But it's still not enough. A special legislative session from November 28 through much of December will propose even more cuts, and more cuts are likely again in the next regular session beginning on January 9, 2012.

The Governor and state legislators scrutinize everything on the **expenditure** side, but they have been refusing to seriously examine the seriously dysfunctional **revenue** side. They don't seriously examine "tax expenditures" – various tax breaks, exemptions and loopholes. Some of these have existed for decades without any oversight.

And they have refused to consider **systemic** changes in Washington State's tax system, which is the most **regressive** in the nation. This means that our state's richest people pay very low tax rates, while poor people pay very high tax rates.

This month's TV program examines all of this. We expose the growing gaps in income and in wealth. Washington State's tax system (mostly sales tax, property tax, and a Business & Occupation tax) is terribly regressive.

Over decades, major changes in the economy have crippled Washington's current tax system from being able to keep up with needs. Now it is a smaller portion of the state's economy – and lower per capita – than before.

Recent years' spending cuts have seriously hurt many people's quality of life, and further spending cuts threaten even worse suffering to our people and our state. One guest flatly says, "**We cannot cut our way to prosperity.**"

We are long past any notion of merely "cutting the fat." For several years we have been cutting muscle and bone. The only solu-

tion is to increase revenue. If we think of the budget as a pie chart, we can adjust the relative sizes of the pieces of the budget pie. We also can make a bigger pie by adding revenue.

The Olympia FOR's December TV program explores short-term remedies and long-term solutions.

Our guests call for transparency and accountability in our tax system. They urge closely reviewing – and closing – many millions of dollars in tax breaks for “special interests” that are simply not justifiable. We also must consider additional revenue sources, such as taxing income, wealth, and financial transactions. Our political and economic systems have made some people and corporations fabulously wealthy. They have a great moral responsibility to pay for the system that made them rich. We could raise taxes on the rich in order to help the working class and the poor.

During recessions governments should create jobs and stimulate the economy, but, instead, federal, state and local levels have been doing the opposite. Slashing budgets and laying off workers only depresses the economy further and feeds into a downward spiral into a deeper hole.

A budget is a numerical way of expressing your values – what you believe in. What do our local, state and federal budgets say about **our** values? Washington State's governor and legislature keep cutting programs that are absolutely necessary for children, the sick, and the poor. The guests call upon the TV viewers to get involved.

We have three exceptionally well informed guests:

- **Jim Dawson** is the Campaign Director for Fuse Washington, a statewide non-profit organization that works on taxation and other public policy issues.

- **Brendan Williams** is a former State Representative from the 22nd Legislative District. He earned a great reputation for boldly analyzing and critiquing our state's fiscal problems and for speaking and acting boldly to solve those problems.

- **Chris Reykdal** is a current State Representative from our 22nd Legislative District. He likewise is vigorously representing the public's interest in promoting social and economic justice in various ways, including working to reform our state's tax system.