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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Washington State Senate fails to pass capital budget; leaves environmental issues unresolved** *Futurewise counts wins and losses from 2017 Legislative Session*

**OLYMPIA** (July 20, 2017) – With the closing of the Washington State Legislature’s third overtime session today, several of Futurewise’s top priority issues related to growth management and the environment were left unresolved or weakened by an empowered Republican majority in the Senate.

The legislature failed to reach agreement on an equitable solution to the state’s ongoing water management crisis, as defined by the Hirst decision. Futurewise worked with partners to develop realistic solutions to the problem, of which there were many, that would have provided relief for rural property owners while protecting senior water rights, agricultural rights and fish habitat. However, the issue was left unresolved, and linked to the Senate’s refusal to pass a biennial capital budget for the first time in the state’s history – a decision that will have massive impacts on school construction, mental health facilities, infrastructure projects and numerous other initiatives.

“The Senate Majority has sacrificed our schools, our local governments, and our most vulnerable citizens for special interests who want to continue to create new lots and build new developments without adequate drinking water and sell them to unsuspecting families,” said Chris Wierzbicki, Executive Director of Futurewise.

“We went to Olympia to negotiate a long-term solution to the Hirst issues,” he continued. “Our goal in the next several months is to continue building a coalition of partners that includes rural homeowners, farmers, tribe members and others that support mitigation for exempt wells by putting water back into impacted rivers and streams. This is not an unfixable problem, but it will require resources and good faith negotiating to get it solved.”

Other Futurewise priorities were also unrealized by this year, as the lack of a capital budget impacted over \$100 million set aside for the Housing Trust Fund, which Futurewise has supported over the last several years in an effort to address the state’s affordable housing crisis. In addition, the passage of [HB 2243](#) will allow schools to be sited farther away from the children they serve – an outcome that Futurewise has fought against consistently in an effort to keep school construction from encouraging suburban sprawl and exacerbating the costs of transportation and infrastructure.

We did make advancements in a key long-term priority with [HB 2023](#) – a bill that would have prevented developments from being sited within illegal expansions of a city’s urban growth boundary – passed the House. This indicates that House members understand the negative impacts that illegal developments have on communities, like those that have plagued Spokane in recent years.

Lastly, Futurewise was successful in working with partners to fend off attacks on Sound Transit funding, ensuring that voter-approved projects to deliver high quality transit to Puget Sound communities will remain intact.

Futurewise State Policy Director, Bryce Yadon remained optimistic, despite some of the outcomes of the 2017 session. "We worked hard to build trust and support numerous pieces of legislation that would have resulted in better outcomes for the people of Washington State," he said. "As frustrating as it is when issues are left unresolved, it also means there are still opportunities ahead."