

Lawmakers Need Not Delay

The 39th Washington State Legislature, convening tomorrow, will face an immediate test of its statesmanship. Under United States District Court order, the lawmakers must create an entirely new—and equitable—pattern of legislative districts before enacting any other major legislation.

It will not be an easy task. Nothing less than political survival will be at stake for some of the lawmakers. Obviously, there is reluctance to change an apportionment system under which every member of the Legislature—simply by virtue of his election—has benefited.

Despite difficulties, there can be no excuse for delay. The lawmakers have known for months of their impending duty. And those legislators who were in charge of redistricting bills in the 1963 Legislature are still in office. There has been ample time to prepare legislation that commands some chance of majority bipartisan support.

The public has a right not to expect prolonged wrangling over redistricting to the extent that it interferes with the passage of other vital legislation or that it causes an unnecessary or costly special session after the regular, 60-day session has ended.

Given all the time and attention that legislative specialists on redistricting have devoted to the subject, the Legislature ought to be able to do the job within two weeks—and do it right.

By that we mean that the new districts should not only be roughly in population balance, but that also there should be a common-sense recognition of community interests and geographic features.

While the redistricting committees of the two houses are at work, there need be no slowdown of other parts of the legislative process. The court order merely forbids **PASSAGE** of most other measures, pending disposal of redistricting. It does not bar **CONSIDERATION** of other measures.

Thus the regular legislative machinery can function as usual, beginning tomorrow. Legislation of consequence is rarely passed during the first six weeks of any legislative session.

The voters, we are certain, are not of a mind to accept the redistricting problem as an excuse for any failure to deal in a timely and constructive fashion with the many issues demanding legislative action.