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# From the Editor

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Ash and smoke rise from the massive central crater of the Mount St. Helens volcano after the eruption in 1980.

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

# The Current Pandemic Has Echoes of Emergencies Past

At first, state health officials advised us to cover our nose and mouth with bandanas when we went outside. Then they told us to wet the bandanas, then came a wear-nothing command. And, finally, the advice was to just stay inside. The reality was no one really knew what was best.

It was May 18, 1980, in Spokane, Wash., the day Mount St. Helens erupted and rained several inches of thick, very fine, gray ash on my college graduation ceremony.

I've been struck by some of the similarities of that event with the current pandemic. The eerie quietness. The empty grocery store shelves. The disappointment of events canceled. The frustration



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of being confined to your home. The uncertainty of what lay ahead. It was a confusing time with conflicting information on what to do with all the ash, and what all the ash might do to us.

Still, the scope of that natural disaster 40 years ago pales in comparison to what we face today. COVID-19 is like no other. In this issue, we discuss how it has affected legislatures and how they have responded. We look at how policy areas and elections have been altered, perhaps permanently.

And we introduce you to some of the heroes among us—fellow lawmakers and staff who are nurses and doctors working on the front lines against the coronavirus.

We know we'll get through this pandemic, as the TV ads continually remind us. So, we've included a few non-COVID-19 topics as well, along with a nod to all the hardworking legislative staff, highlighting a few of you in a Legislative Staff Week special section. And, we bring this issue to you as a digital and PDF edition only, keeping an acceptable social distance, always.

—Julie Lays