



April 9, 2007

Hello, friends...

Today, we are beginning the final two weeks of the regular 105-day Legislative session, and we've got a lot in store for us. We'll be passing bills on the Senate floor all week, sometimes working late into the evening. **On Friday at 5:00 p.m. we will reach the cutoff to hear bills which originated in the House of Representatives**, and then we'll spend the rest of our time here working to reach concurrence on all the bills passed by both houses of the Legislature.

In this edition of my e-mail update, I'm going to bring you up to speed on some of my bills that have passed and give you some insight as to how things work in your state government. While I truly enjoy the opportunity to represent you here in Olympia, I am looking forward to getting back home.

As always, I want to thank you for taking the time to read this. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me at Carrell.Mike@leg.wa.gov, or drop by my office if you're in Olympia.

House passes SB 5321: my child welfare bill

In a 97-0 vote Thursday, the **state House of Representatives unanimously passed my child welfare bill, Senate Bill 5321.** This bill will protect families accused of child abuse by requiring the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to make reasonable efforts to investigate the validity of the claim and resolve the case.

I proposed SB 5321 because DSHS would often leave foster families accused of child abuse or neglect in limbo after investigating the claim. DSHS currently has three classifications of claims - founded, unfounded and inconclusive. **It's unfair to families and children to leave potential foster families with a smudge on their record.** It's time for foster families in Washington to receive the same fair judgment our judicial system uses by determining either guilt or innocence. If SB 5321 is signed into law, the inconclusive classification will be removed and DSHS will make final determinations as to the validity of accusations based on any evidence collected during an investigation.

I'm pleased to see this legislation pass with so much support and I look forward to this bill coming back to the Senate where we can pass it again and put it before the governor to sign into law.

Tacoma Narrows Bridge decision

You may have read about this in the paper, but I wanted to give you a little more background on the issue. As you know, **construction of the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge has fallen behind schedule.** The main contractor building the new bridge, Tacoma Narrows Constructors (TNC), had a few problems late last year that caused them to miss several deadlines that were in their contract. TNC claims that adverse fall weather forced them to delay work on the bridge which resulted in the missed deadlines. While the bad weather did cause TNC to have to back up their schedule, it's important to note that they were already behind schedule because of an error on the part of one of their subcontractors.

After missing a completion deadline last Monday, TNC requested a 26-day extension from the state Department of Transportation. The DOT negotiated with TNC and came to an agreement that the contractor would be granted 16 days. Under the contract the company is liable for \$125,000 a day up to a maximum of \$45 million if the project is late. Officials say the bridge won't be finished before August.

I think the settlement was unwarranted because the contractor was four months behind schedule before the storms. TNC failed to complete a deck-lifting operation on time, and you may remember the news stories about giant bundles of cable for the new bridge that were left out and became rusty in the sea air. Claiming that the bad weather was solely responsible for the delays is simply erroneous. The problems with the cable and decking caused the delay, and the delay pushed the work schedule into the period of bad weather. Everybody knows what it's like in western Washington in October, November and December. We have the highest rainfall of the year during that period.

We need to be fair with contractors and follow the contract, and I think the contractor needs to do the same. They need to take up the delay with their subcontractors rather than the taxpayers in the state of Washington. You shouldn't be left holding bag for this. **I will continue to pursue this to make sure taxpayers aren't forced to foot the bill.**

Renaming state transportation facilities

Last session, I was able to get the Berkeley Avenue overpass in Lakewood renamed "Freedom Bridge." I've probably spoken with many of you on Saturday mornings on the bridge while waving to motorists or waving a flag in support of our brave servicemen and servicewomen.

Though it took several years, I was able to garner enough citizen support to persuade the state Transportation Commission to officially designate the overpass at I-5 exit 122 as Freedom Bridge. We held a rededication ceremony last June and the state put up Freedom Bridge signs on the overpass.

It came to my attention that while the signs had been placed and the ceremony was long behind us, the Transportation Commission technically didn't have the authority to rename bridges and overpasses. They had been doing it for years, but never officially had the responsibility to do so. So this year, some of my colleagues proposed legislation to give the Transportation Commission that authority, and I'm happy to report that the bill will be signed by the governor this week. I don't expect anyone to change the name of Freedom Bridge back to what it originally was, but it's good to know that the Transportation Commission will now be able to really make the name change official.

Honoring Chris Navarre

Some of you may know Chris Navarre, one of our neighbors who lives at Patriot's Landing in DuPont with his wife, Bernice. During WWII, Chris served as a tank gunner with the 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion, and spearheaded several attacks that allowed General Patton's 4th Armored Division to drive into Germany. He fought elements from 14 different German divisions in the drive across the Rhine River.

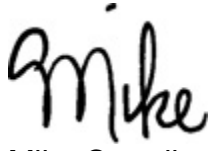
Late last year, the President of France signed a decree naming Chris a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor for his efforts during WWII. **Chris will be honored by the Washington State Senate on Tuesday for his courage and valor, and I'm grateful that his services to the USA and to France are finally being recognized.**

In Closing

I appreciate you taking the time to read my e-mail update. Please don't hesitate to call, write or e-mail me with any other comments, questions or concerns you might have. You can reach me using the information below.

- Office address:
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the 'i'.

Mike Carrell
28th District State Senator