



316 Legislative Building • PO Box 40412 • Olympia WA 98504-0412
E-MAIL: parlette.linda@leg.wa.gov • PHONE: (360)786-7622 • FAX: (360)786-1266
Senate Republican Caucus Chair
Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;
Ways and Means; Rules

Jan. 9, 2009

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe the holidays are over and the 2009 legislative session will get underway next week. While I will miss being with you in north central Washington during the next several months, I am honored to continue representing you as your state senator in Olympia.

January Storm Closes Blewett Pass

We're all familiar with the storm January 6th and 7th that brought heavy rains and snowmelt that severely damaged road and highway systems throughout the state. State and contractor crews have been working around the clock to reopen critical links across the mountains. Stevens and Snoqualmie passes are now open. Blewett Pass, however, suffered significant damage in several locations and will be closed at least through next week. Parts of the road were washed out and undermined including a 300' washout at milepost 182, a 400' wide mudslide near Bonanza Campground and 2 lanes of the highway are undermined at Ruby Creek. Contractor crews are currently at work repairing this damage. No estimated time of reopening is available at this time. Photos of the damage on Blewett Pass can be found at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wsdot/sets/72157612297436920/>

Key dates this legislative session

The 2009 legislative session will begin Jan. 12 and is scheduled to end April 26. Throughout the session there will be many cutoff dates before the Legislature. Here are the most significant dates this session:

- ❖ **Feb. 25:** This is the last day for House and Senate committees to act on bills originating in their own chamber (with the exception of bills with a cost – those have until March 2 to pass out of committee).
- ❖ **March 12:** The last day for House and Senate to pass their own bills to the other chamber.
- ❖ **March 30:** Last day for House and Senate committees to act on bills from the opposite chamber (with the exception of bills with a cost – those have until April 6 to pass committee).
- ❖ **April 17:** Last day for the House and Senate to vote on bills from the opposite chamber, except bills with a cost or those in dispute between the chambers.
- ❖ **April 26:** Session scheduled to end.

Committees and roles

A major portion of every session is spent in committee, where senators and representatives hold public hearings and vote on bills. This session I will be serving on four committees:

- Health and Long-Term Care – dealing with all health care bills and related issues;
- Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance – changed this year to include issues related to housing, including affordable housing;
- Ways and Means – the Senate’s primary fiscal committee; and
- Rules – the committee that determines which bills are scheduled for consideration by the full Senate.

In addition, my Senate Republican colleagues recently re-elected me to continue serving as their caucus chair. In this role my responsibilities include:

- calling members of the caucus into session;
- setting the agenda for caucus meetings;
- chairing all caucus meetings;
- speaking to groups and organizations on caucus issues;
- serving as spokesperson for the caucus on operational matters; and
- serving as the lead Republican on the Senate Facilities and Operations Committee.

These roles and responsibilities will make for another very busy session, but will also provide me with many opportunities to serve all of you in the 12th District.

What’s the biggest issue of 2009? The budget!

As I am sure you have heard, Washington is facing a serious budget challenge. In fact, our state is about \$6 billion short of the funding needed to continue promised services and programs.

Although some of the blame for this problem lies with the national economic downturn, Washington was already headed for a historically large budget deficit when the national economic troubles hit. The state deficit we’re facing now would be much more manageable if there hadn’t been year after year of overspending – a 33 percent spending increase in just the past four years alone.

While many of my colleagues and I have been sounding the spending alarm for years and did not support most of the choices that led to this crisis, we are ready to help turn the situation around in a way that reflects the true priorities of government.

First, we must address the half-billion dollar hole in the current budget that runs through June. The Legislature should immediately pass a revised 2007-09 budget which includes money-saving policy changes that will carry forward into the 2009-11 budget. Because we are in the final quarter of our 2-year budget, every dollar we save now will compound into four dollars saved in the 2009-11 budget.

Once that’s accomplished, the Legislature should build the 2009-11 budget using three basic principles:

1. Protect services for the most vulnerable. For example, in these tight budget times it is more important to preserve services for the most needy than to give pay raises to those who already have jobs.
2. Do not increase taxes and do not pass the buck to voters by asking them to approve a tax increase tied to specific programs. Higher taxes will only hurt our economy. The

governor's budget, released last month, shows that a no-new-taxes budget is possible. The Legislature should also follow that course.

3. Build a budget that is transparent and sustainable. The Legislature should not take money from pensions, sell off tobacco settlement money or cut popular programs first to build a case for more or higher taxes.

Our budget problems are big, but using these common-sense principles we can address the problem and get our state back on track. Once we do, we will be able to move on to things we have been waiting for, such as property tax relief that is so desperately needed.

Budget Tidbits

For those of you who haven't yet read the "Budget Tidbits," I am pleased to present them to you for the first time. These regular updates on the budget, authored by Sen. Joe Zarelli, ranking Republican member on the Senate budget-writing committee, provide "just the facts" on state spending. You can read the latest Budget Tidbits by clicking [here](#).

Wildlife fence coming to Highway 97A

Lately we have been hearing more and more stories about mountain sheep and other animals crossing Highway 97A, often with disastrous results for drivers. Fortunately, plans are underway for a wildlife fence along the west side of Highway 97A between mileposts 207.98 and 212.98. The project is in the final design phase, with contract plans and specifications being prepared to go out for bid in February. Construction of the 4.5-mile fence should begin in April or early May, and is projected to take just over two months to complete. Hopefully this project will help us keep both motorists and animals safe.

Women's Suffrage Centennial celebration

Washington was the fifth state in the nation, and the first state in the 20th century, to pass a constitutional amendment granting all women the right to vote in all elections. In 1909, the all-male members of the Legislature passed the constitutional amendment, and it was approved by the all-male voters of Washington at the general election in November 1910. This session I, along with some of my legislative colleagues from both sides of the aisle, are organizing a celebration commemorating the centennial of women's suffrage in Washington. I'll share more details with you as the event gets closer.

On the radio...

Each Friday during the legislative session my 12th District colleagues from the House of Representatives and I are on the radio talking about what's going on in Olympia. You can catch us on these stations at these times:

- KOHO (101.1 FM) in Leavenworth – 7:15 – 7:30 a.m.
- KPQ (560AM) in Wenatchee – 8 – 8:30 a.m.
- KOZI (1230 AM, 93.5 FM, 100.9 FM, 103.1 FM) in Chelan – 8:35 – 9:00 a.m.

I encourage you to listen in whenever you have the opportunity.

In addition, I call in to the Wenatchee Valley, Lake Chelan and Leavenworth chambers of commerce each Friday from 7:30 to 8 a.m. to keep them apprised of what is happening in Olympia. If you are a chamber member you may be able to get information about the call from your particular organization.

In closing...

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and you are transitioning smoothly into the new year. I know we will be facing many challenges in 2009 as a community, a state and a nation, but I have confidence that we will pull together and help each other during this time of need.

If there is anything I or my office staff can do to assist you, please let us know. You can reach me in a variety of ways:

Mail: Sen. Linda Evans Parlette, 316 Legislative Building, PO Box 40412, Olympia, WA 98504-0412

E-mail: Parlette.Linda@leg.wa.gov

Phone: (360) 786-7622

FAX: (360) 786-1266

Toll-free legislative hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Web site: www.senatorepublicans.wa.gov/parlette

If you know of anyone who would like to receive these “In Touch” updates from Olympia, please have them contact me at Parlette.Linda@leg.wa.gov. I would be honored to add them to our e-mail list.

Finally, I encourage you to drop by and say hello if you are in Olympia during the session. It’s always a delight to see people from home.

All the best,

Linda

LINDA EVANS PARLETTE

Washington State Senator, 12th District

(509) 663-9702 E-mail: Parlette.Linda@leg.wa.gov

Legislative Toll Free Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

For information about public hearings, proposed new laws, and the progress of bills you are interested in, please visit the Legislature’s Information Web site at www.leg.wa.gov.