

GREETINGS FROM SENATOR LINDA EVANS PARLETTE

E-mail Update

WASHINGTON STATE 12TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



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Senate Republican Caucus Chair

Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;
Ways and Means; Rules

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Dear Friends,

Greetings again from Olympia. This is week four of the fifteen week session. We spent most of the week in committee, hearing and taking action on bills. We are a short three weeks away from our first cut-off for hearing policy measures and the pace is really picking up. The budget deficit continues to drive many of our policy discussions.

I also had the privilege of meeting with many groups visiting from home this past week. I appreciate it when you take the time to visit with me about those issues of most importance to you. If you are planning a trip to Olympia in the near future, please be sure to stop by my office, or call in advance to make an appointment.

Time is money: Day 20 without a supplemental budget vote

As you have probably heard, we are facing what could be a \$7 billion to \$8 billion deficit for the 2009-11 biennium. Sometimes it's difficult to get a grasp on a number that size, so it's helpful to think about it in another way. For example, there are 6.5 million citizens in Washington. If every man, woman and child were to pay \$1,000 to the state general fund, we'd collect \$6.5 billion and it still wouldn't be enough to cover the deficit!

When Gov. Locke left office in early 2005, Washington had a \$25 billion budget. In four years the budget has grown \$8 billion to \$33.7 billion. That's a 33 percent increase. No matter how you look at it, that's just not sustainable over the long term.

One of the best things we can do to address our budget problem is to pass a smaller, fiscally responsible supplemental budget to complete the 2007-09 biennium that ends June 30. We should then build the 2009-11 budget using three principles:

- protect services for the most vulnerable;
- do not increase taxes, and don't approach voters asking for a tax increase; and
- develop a transparent and sustainable budget.

Gov. Gregoire proposed a budget that did not include tax increases. The Legislature should do the same. I will keep you updated on this issue as the Legislature acts on it.

Bill hearings this week

Several of the bills I've sponsored received a hearing this week. They are:

- **Protecting recreational fishing opportunities.** [Senate Bill 5421](#) was heard in the Senate Natural Resources, Ocean and Recreation Committee on Monday. For more information please read the [news release](#) about the bill.
- **Bill to aid young drivers.** [Senate Bill 5469](#) would ensure young drivers are not placed on probation if they are involved in an accident that is not their fault. The bill was the subject of a hearing on Tuesday. I issued a [news release](#) about this bill last week. On Wednesday *The Olympian* published a very supportive [editorial](#) about the bill.
- **Protection when purchasing a vehicle.** [Senate Bill 5388](#) would require that motor vehicle dealers disclose, in writing, damage (repaired or unrepaired) when selling a car, including to another dealer. This bill passed the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee on Thursday.
- **Expanding the recreational use statute.** [Senate Bill 5422](#) would give the Chelan County PUD liability protection when kayakers use the Chelan Gorge waterfalls, cascades and chutes on its property. These would be the same types of protections offered to landowners who allow rock climbing on their property. SB 5422 passed the Senate Natural Resources, Ocean and Recreation Committee on Wednesday. For more information, click [here](#).
- **Naming chronically ill kids State Patrol “Chief for a Day.”** [Senate Bill 5582](#) would allow the Washington State Patrol to partner with local law enforcement agencies and hospitals to name chronically ill children “chief for a day.” In the past, law enforcement agencies have individually hosted programs that recognize and give honorary status to children in poor health, such as the one associated with the Apple Blossom Festival. SB 5582 creates a mechanism to carry out these programs on a statewide basis by permitting the State Patrol to accept grant funds and gifts to facilitate the program, and allowing the use of their facilities. The Senate Transportation Committee held a hearing on SB 5582 on Thursday. You can read a news release about the bill [here](#).

Coming up next week

There will be additional action next week on some of the bills I’ve sponsored:

- **Ensuring training for home inspectors.** [Senate Bill 5644](#) would allow home inspectors to be able to take their training either in a classroom or online. Right now state law requires that they take that training in a classroom. This presents a hardship for some people in the 12th District because the only class is offered several hours away. SB 5644 is scheduled for a public hearing on Feb. 12 in the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.
- **Giving school district employees more health care choices.** [Senate Bill 5515](#) would make health savings accounts (HSAs) available to school district employees. SB 5515, which has bipartisan support, has been scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee on Feb. 11.
- **Designating counties, cities and towns as bona fide nonprofit organizations.** [Senate Bill 5645](#) would allow local governments, including the city of East Wenatchee, to continue their long-standing tradition of holding community raffles as long as the revenue is used for community activities or tourism promotion activities, such as the Wings and Wheels Festival and Classy Chassis Parade and Car Show. SB 5645 will be the subject of

a hearing in the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee on Feb. 9. The bill passed the House of Representatives last year but not the Senate.

Students visit from home

This morning I had an opportunity to meet with high school students from Brewster, Bridgeport and Manson who are part of the Latino Education Achievement Project (LEAP) program. The Latino Educational Achievement Project (LEAP) was started in 1998 to improve Latino students' academic performance. The group's activities include hosting student leadership forums and public education workshops, advocating at the state Legislature for bill passage and meeting with legislators while taking part in an annual legislative day to raise awareness of issues that affect Latino students.

While in Olympia students from Bridgeport and Manson toured the Capitol and listened in to my weekly radio conversation with KOZI radio in Chelan. The young people from Brewster had lunch with local lawmakers in the Senate Republican Caucus meeting room.

It was a pleasure to spend time with these young people from North Central Washington and see them participating first-hand in the legislative process. I encourage you to click [here](#) to see a [photo](#) of this event.

Bills of concern; Please share *your* thoughts!

There are several controversial bills before the Legislature this session. Below are summaries on some of them. I would be interested in hearing your thoughts on these issues.

- [Senate Bill 5735](#) would impose carbon emission limits on 120 of Washington's largest employers. Companies that can't meet the new requirements would be required to buy credits to offset their excess emissions. Opponents of this plan say it will increase the cost of electricity, natural gas, gasoline, diesel fuel and related products. An [article](#) in the Wall Street Journal this week said that in California, one year after "cap-and-trade" legislation was signed into law, that state led the nation in job losses and companies were leaving the state in anticipation of the new mandates. *SB 5735 received a public hearing in the Senate Environment, Water and Energy Committee on February 3.*
- [Senate Bill 5708](#) creates mileage-based car insurance as a step to limit and reduce carbon emissions. Determining mileage may involve a tracking device in cars and trucks to verify miles driven. This could be more expensive for Eastern Washington residents who often must travel farther for goods and services. *SB 5708 has been referred to the Senate Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance Committee.*
- [Senate Bill 5859](#) would require a state-issued permit for the use of studded tires even in the winter. The permit would cost \$100 per vehicle and be issued at the time of initial vehicle licensing or when a vehicle license is renewed. I understand studded tires can be hard on roads, and know that tire makers are producing some new and innovative products in this area. I also understand how important studded tires are to people who depend on them to get around safely in the winter. With record snowfalls in Eastern Washington this year and budgets tight, there is concern that people who couldn't afford the permit would simply forego putting on studded tires at a risk to their personal safety. *SB 5859 has been referred to the Senate Transportation Committee.*

Budget calculator online

Gov. Gregoire has a new budget calculator tool on her Web site that lets citizens play with different scenarios for balancing the budget. You can view the budget calculator [here](#).

In closing...

Thanks again for the opportunity to represent you in Olympia. If there is anything my staff or I can do for you, please give us a call.

All the best,

Linda

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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.