



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

April 18, 2009

Dear Friends,

Here we are, down to the last nine days of the 2009 legislative session. Yesterday was the deadline for the House and Senate to take action on bills from the opposite chamber, except those necessary to implement the budget and those bills in dispute between the chambers.

On Wednesday the Senate Ways and Means Committee passed the proposed Senate budget. The next step is for the budget to come before the full Senate for consideration. The House must do the same, and then the two chambers must reach agreement on the final budget details. That work must occur before the April 26 deadline or the Legislature will be called into a special session to complete the job.

The Senate is expected to work all weekend.

Welcome to new e-mail update readers!

Recently many people across the 12th District have signed up to receive my e-mail updates. Thank you for your interest in what's going on in Olympia! For those of you who are new to these updates, I wanted to catch you up on the session.

The biggest issue before the Legislature this year is balancing the state's current budget (that ends June 30) and writing a new 2009-11 budget. There has been discussion in Olympia of needing to raise taxes to balance the budget. In fact, just this week we saw introduction of a proposal to [increase the state sales tax](#) by 3/10 of 1 percent.

Many of my colleagues and I have taken a different approach, saying that ["Yes, we can!"](#) balance the budget without raising taxes. We believe the budget should be built using three principles:

1. Protect services for the most vulnerable;
2. Don't increase taxes and do not pass that responsibility to voters by asking them to do so;
and
3. Adopt a budget that is transparent and sustainable.

You can read more about this "Yes, we can!" idea in the [Budget Tidbits](#), a "just the facts" approach from Sen. Joe Zarelli, Senate Republican leader on budget issues.

Reforming state government

In December my colleagues and I called for a three-stage approach to solving our state's budget challenges.

- First, act early to reduce spending and enact money-saving policy changes. Every dollar saved in the final leg of the 2007-09 budget would multiply to \$4 in savings in the 2009-11 budget.
- Second, enact government reforms.
- Finally, look at reductions.

The first two steps – acting early and enacting government reforms – did not occur and the budget focused solely on cuts.

While we don't still have the option to act early in the session, it isn't too late to adopt much-needed government reforms. This week I co-sponsored several bills to accomplish that goal. You can read about those proposals and others in the latest edition of the [Budget Tidbits](#).

House bills pass Senate in final days

- **Senate approves bill to provisionally restore voting rights to felons before debts are paid.** The Senate amended [House Bill 1517](#), which was a straight-forward restoration of a felon's voting rights, to a process that provides only a provisional restoration – which helps, but many believe this is still not fair to victims. Under the Senate amendment, a felon who is no longer in prison or otherwise supervised by the Department of Corrections would have his or her voting rights restored on a provisional basis before paying off all debts to victims. If the offender is found to be willfully not trying to pay off his or her debts, the court may revoke the provisional restoration. This information must be forwarded to the state's chief elections officer, the Secretary of State. The final vote in the Senate was 29-19. The bill must go back to the House of Representatives for consideration of the change made by the Senate.
- **Senate approves bill to help keep fish hatcheries operating** [Second Substitute House Bill 1951](#) would authorize the Department of Fish and Wildlife to enter into partnerships with nonprofit organizations, for-profit entities and tribes to operate state-owned fish hatcheries. Seven hatcheries face closure in the 2009-11 operating budget to address the deficit. Those hatcheries are in Colville, Omak, Arlington, Mossyrock, McKernan, Bellingham and Palmer Ponds. SSHB 1951 was amended by the Senate and is now before the House of Representatives for consideration of the Senate changes.

Intermediate driver's license bill signed into law

Today Gov. Gregoire signed into law [Substitute Senate Bill 5469](#), a bill I sponsored to protect young drivers involved in accidents that are not their fault. Under the new law, a young driver with an intermediate drivers' license will not be put on probation if he or she is involved in an accident, a ticket is issued and the accident was not the fault of the young driver. The measure goes into effect in late July.

Washington's wildfire season officially gets under way

April 15 to October 15 is wildfire season and the state Department of Natural Resources is urging people to take extra care when engaging in outdoor activities. When vegetation is dry, it

can quickly ignite and spread. Washington's summer fire rules are now in effect and apply to 12.7 million acres of private and state forestlands. During the 2006 forest fire season, 480,000 acres burned at a cost of \$64 million. For more information, visit the department's Web site and click on [Fire & Burning Regulations](#).

In closing...

Thanks to those of you who continue to contact me with your thoughts, suggestions and feedback. It's always a pleasure to hear from those of you at home. I look forward to being back in the district with you very soon.

All the best,

Linda

LINDA EVANS PARLETTE

Washington State Senator, 12th District

(360) 786-7622 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.