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**Senate Republican Caucus Chair**

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

**March 27, 2009**

Dear Friends,

There are just four weeks to go in the 2009 legislative session. My Senate colleagues and I have spent most of the week in committee meetings, hearing and voting on bills already passed by the House of Representatives. Next week the entire Senate will spend more time voting on bills in the Senate chamber. In addition, if the majority party releases a budget, my colleagues and I who are members of the Ways and Means Committee will spend time hearing bills related to the budget.

**Honoring the late Jim Ward**

Earlier today a group of friends from Leavenworth made the trek over the mountains to join me in honoring former Leavenworth Mayor and long-time community leader Jim Ward. I sponsored a resolution in his honor, which was read to all members of the Senate and becomes part of the institution's permanent record.

Jim's many years of service to the Leavenworth community had a big impact on many of us. As the resolution states, "Now, therefore, let it be resolved, that the Washington State Senate hereby acknowledge and honor the lasting impression of Jim Ward's selfless service to Washington State's North Central Valley and the community of Leavenworth."

It was exciting to have people visit from home and help us honor Jim. You can read the full text of the resolution [here](#).

**Senate transportation budget released**

This week the Senate released details of its proposed 2009-11 transportation budget. Despite the expected shortfall in this \$7.3 billion budget I am pleased to report that 12th District projects are nearly all intact in the budget. Most are still on schedule, with just one delay.

The three large George Sellar Bridge projects retained their funding. Here are updates on them:

- George Sellar Bridge (SR 285): Additional eastbound lane construction is scheduled to run from May until winter stops the work; it is slated for completion in 2010.
- West end George Sellar Bridge (SR 285): Intersection improvement project is funded and scheduled for construction in 2011.
- East end of the George Sellar Bridge (SR 28): Construction is scheduled for 2010.

Funding is also intact for work at the junction of US 2 and Highway 97 to Ninth Street (SR 28), where stage one and design work is underway. Construction is scheduled for the summer of 2010 and 2011.

In addition to these projects, we have received federal funding for a couple new projects in and around the 12th District:

- \$736,250 for terminal expansion at Pangborn Memorial Airport in Wenatchee; and
- \$1.5 million for a historic pipeline/pedestrian bridge in Wenatchee.

The one delayed project is paving at US 97 and Orondo northward.

Keep in mind that these lists and figures could change as the Senate and House meld their transportation budgets. I will follow this process closely.

We are likely to see details of the 2009 supplemental and 2009-11 operating budgets on Monday. If so, I will have more details for you next week.

### **Potential closure of state parks**

One area that will likely face deep cuts in the operating budget is state parks. Many of you have heard about this already and have contacted me to say you support keeping our state parks and recreational areas open. I agree with you; state parks are tremendous assets to our communities.

This issue has been garnering public attention since the governor's budget, released in December, directed the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to reduce its budget by 10 percent. Later the majority party in the House asked State Parks to identify how the agency would handle a \$23 million budget reduction. This would result in an additional 33 parks being transferred, mothballed or closed – 45 parks in all.

Several parks in the 12th District are on the closure/mothball list, including:

- The Wenatchee Confluence;
- Lake Wenatchee State Park;
- Alta Lake Park near Pateros; and
- Sun Lakes-Dry Falls State Park near Coulee City.

One alternative under consideration is changing the \$5 parks donation on vehicle registrations from an “opt in” system to an “opt out.” Under the new proposal, rather than choose to donate, you would choose not to donate. Details on this measure have not been worked out, but I will continue to monitor its progress as it works through the legislative process.

You can find more details about this issue on the State Parks Web site at <http://www.parks.wa.gov/>. Select “Commission Meetings” and click on 2009-03-05 detailed Commission agenda items.doc, then go to item E-5 to find detailed information on how the agency selected the additional 33 parks for closure.

Parks are tremendous assets to our communities. I will continue to work on ways to help them stay open.

## **WSU Extension news**

Colleges and universities have been asked, in preparation for the 2009-11 budget, to look at ways they can be more efficient and/or cut costs. One of the things under consideration is a plan by Washington State University to accelerate the reunification of WSU Extension with the College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences. WSU Extension extends non-credit education and degree opportunities to people and communities throughout the state, including through the Extension office located in Wenatchee.

WSU Extension was originally part of the College of Agriculture and was made its own college in the 1980s. Part of the reason for doing so was that Extension's mission was broadened into other areas, including business, industry and energy. Bringing Extension back into the College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences will result in a reduction in administrative overhead and allow for the agriculture positions that are split between agriculture research and the Extension to be more efficiently managed. We should know more about this proposal when the budget is released.

## **Legislation update**

Several of the bills I sponsored continue to move through the House of Representatives:

- **Disclosing vehicle damage.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5388](#) would require auto dealers to disclose damage when selling a car, including to another dealer. SSB 5388 is in the House Rules Committee awaiting floor action.
- **Property tax annual valuations.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5368](#) would require annual revaluations of property for tax purposes, which would help eliminate huge spikes in property tax assessments and property tax bills. The bill passed the House Finance Committee on March 26 and is now in Rules.
- **Bill to aid young drivers.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5469](#) would ensure, for drivers with an intermediate driver's license, that being in an accident would no longer be grounds for denying the lifting of the license restrictions if there is another party to the accident and the other party was cited in connection with the accident. SSB 5469 passed the House Transportation Committee on March 16 and is now in Rules.

## **Bill to eliminate retakes of the math WASL for high school graduation delivered to governor**

Passing the math WASL is not yet a graduation requirement, but sophomore students who fail it are required to try two more times. These retake requirements are eliminated in [House Bill 1562](#). Students would still be required to take two math classes after their sophomore year. The bill has an emergency clause and would take effect in time for the class of 2009.

## **Budget transparency bill wins committee approval**

This year I co-sponsored [Substitute Senate Bill 5073](#), a measure that would do away with several budget-related accounts and move the balances into the state general fund. There are many benefits to this legislation. Making the general fund larger will increase the size of required deposits into the "rainy-day" savings fund. The consolidation will also bring greater transparency to how revenue and spending relate so taxpayers can better see things for themselves. This week

the Senate Ways and Means Committee approved the measure, sending it to the Rules Committee where it becomes eligible for a full Senate vote.

### **Consumer alerts and updates**

- New from the state Department of Revenue, the [SuspectFraud.com](http://SuspectFraud.com) Web site allows consumers to find out if a business is registered and report unlicensed businesses.
- DOR is also warning business owners to hang up if they receive an automated call, supposedly from the department, that redirects the person to a "101" number. This is a toll call puts a \$5.95 charge on the business phone plus undisclosed administrative fees. The department does have a toll-free number (1-800-647-7706), but it never directs the caller to a second number that charges a fee.
- The Washington State Department of Agriculture is encouraging the public to bring pesticides, such as insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and rodenticides, to dispose of them for free. There is an event in Chelan on May 20 and one in Okanogan on May 21. **The deadline to sign up for these events is April 6.** To sign up, call (360) 902-2056, (877) 301-4555 (toll free) or send an e-mail to [wastepesticide@agr.wa.gov](mailto:wastepesticide@agr.wa.gov). For more information, contact the Waste Pesticide Program, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42589, Olympia, WA 98504-2589 or visit the WSDA Web site at [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov) and click on "Pesticides and Fertilizers."

### **In closing...**

Thank you, as always, for your interest in what the Legislature is doing on your behalf in Olympia. If any of your friends or neighbors would like to receive these weekly updates, please have them send me an e-mail at [Parlette.Linda@leg.wa.gov](mailto:Parlette.Linda@leg.wa.gov). We would be honored to add them to our e-mail list.

Have a great week.

All the best,

*Linda*

**LINDA EVANS PARLETTE**

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