



Olympia Report

Jim Honeyford

Serving all of Klickitat and Skamania counties, South Yakima county and southeast Clark county



State Senator • 15th District

MARCH 20, 2009

The state Legislature is wrapping up the 10th week of its 15-week session in Olympia. Thursday, March 12 was the last day for the House of Representatives and Senate to act on their own bills. Policy committees have until March 30 to act on bills from the opposite chamber; the fiscal committees have until April 6. Bills necessary to implement the budget are exempt from cutoffs.

As of the March 12 deadline:

- 359 Senate bills passed in the Senate;
- 18.9 percent, or 68, of these bills were introduced by Republicans; and,
- 81.1 percent, or 291, of these measures were bills introduced by the majority Democrats.

Overall this is not bad given our numbers here in Olympia. The session to date has been marked by a number of job-killing proposals by the majority party, along with its failure to aggressively address the budget deficit.

Fortunately, several bills I introduced are still moving through the legislative process:

- SB 5107 – Addressing renewable resource projects within energy overlay zones. This bill passed the Senate 46-0 and has received a hearing in the House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee.
- SSB 5110 – Allowing spas, wedding boutiques, and art galleries to serve wine or beer to their customers who are 21 years of age or older. This bill passed the Senate by a vote of 44-3, and is scheduled to receive a public hearing in the House Commerce and Labor Committee.
- SB 5115 – Modifying the judicial conduct commission. This bill unanimously passed the Senate and has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.
- SSB 5468 – Permitting an exemption for nonprofit housing organizations from the consumer loan act. This bill unanimously passed the Senate and has had a hearing in the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee.
- SB 5940 – Concerning publicly owned industrial wastewater treatment facilities. This bill unanimously passed the Senate and has received a hearing in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Republicans win approval of “lesson learned” measure

[Senate Joint Resolution 8209](#), a measure I am proud to co-sponsor, was approved in the Senate by a vote of 41-7. This proposed amendment to the Washington State Constitution would require the deposit of “exceptional” state revenues into the rainy-day account.

Between 2005 and 2007 the state collected \$2.4 billion that would have been saved, not spent, if SJR 8209 had been adopted prior to 2005.

It’s too late for this common sense proposal to help the state address today’s \$8.9 billion deficit, but it can serve as a “lesson learned” to avert another fiscal crisis in the future. This bill is before the House of Representatives for consideration.

I-937 amendment does not go far enough to keep energy costs down

The state Energy Independence Act (Initiative 937) requires electric utilities with 25,000 or more customers to meet targets for energy conservation and eligible renewable resources. Failing to meet these targets is punishable by a financial penalty that will be passed on to ratepayers.

During Senate debate on [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5840](#), a measure that makes minor improvements to the act, my Republican colleagues and I proposed six amendments that would help keep energy costs down. Only two were allowed. The majority party rejected amendments to recognize additional sources of hydropower, the full value of biomass-generated energy, the full value of wind power, and all achieved conservation above

(continued on next page)

Senate Republican Assistant Floor Leader

Committee assignments:

- Environment, Water & Energy, Ranking Member
- Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection
- Ways & Means

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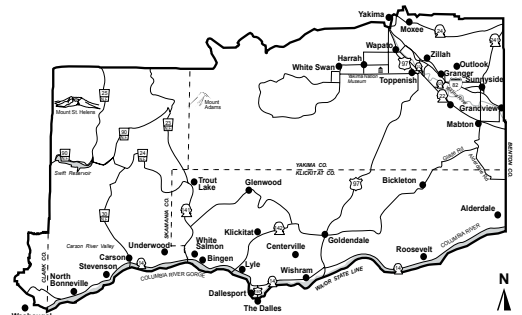
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15th District



the conservation target to help utilities meet their renewable energy target.

I was an original co-sponsor of this bill, and I wanted to support it, but the bill as it passed the Senate fails to do enough to protect consumers from soaring electricity rates. This bill is before the House of Representatives for approval.

New mandates on construction industry

Between December 2007 and December 2008, 44 percent of all jobs lost in Washington were construction jobs. The number of unemployed Washington workers is now at a record high 330,000. New home starts are at the lowest since such construction has been recorded. The booming housing industry that fueled our economy is already in trouble and [Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5895](#) would make it worse, much worse.

This bill will drive up the cost of insurance for builders and drive up the cost of homes. Senate Republicans and six Democrat senators opposed this measure. This measure is before the House of Representatives. A separate bill, crafted by the House, is before the Senate.

“Cap-and-tax” bill passes Senate: Guess who’ll pay?

A bill that would move the state closer to setting mandatory allowances for carbon emissions by

businesses and industries passed the Senate and is before a House committee.

[Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5735](#) may be an improvement over the [original bill](#) by making the caps voluntary and omitting trading credits – for now– but the intent is to have a mandatory program as soon as 2012. The bill tasks the Department of Ecology with studying the impacts of a cap-and-tax scheme on our economy. I offered an amendment that would have moved this important effort to a well-respected independent think tank, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center. Ecology has already shown its hand by supporting a mandatory program; therefore, we can expect its findings to support a cap-and-tax program.

It is also possible that the bill which eventually comes out of the House will be even worse than when it left the Senate. The idea of capping carbon emissions and creating an unregulated market for trading credits is clearly a priority of the governor. In a rare move, Gov. Gregoire testified in person on the bill before the House Ecology and Parks Committee and asked the majority party to restore the bill to full cap-and-tax.

Putting a price on carbon emissions will filter down to families through higher energy bills. This bill sets the stage, and in the end, business closures and job losses will follow soaring energy rates. To learn more about this, please visit my Energy Update page: <http://src.leg.wa.gov/EnergyUpdate.htm>.

Please use this space for any comments, suggestions or problems you would like me to know about.
Or call the toll-free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.



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