



# League of Women Voters of Washington

Barbara Seitle, President // Marilyn Johnston, Lobby Team Coordinator // Newsletter edited by Laura McCarty

[www.lwvwa.org](http://www.lwvwa.org) / [advocacy](#)

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*League office:* 4710 University Way NE #214, Seattle 98105 / 206-622-8961 / 800-419-2596 / [lwvwa@lwvwa.org](mailto:lwvwa@lwvwa.org)

January 8, 2007

## THE NEW YEAR BEGINS

The first 2007 *Legislative Newsletter* is being published to coincide with the opening day of the **2007 Washington State Legislature** in Olympia (this is the first day of the first year of a new biennium—the so-called “long” session of 15 weeks’ duration).

The newsletter—which includes League portfolio chairs’ assessments of the issues that are likely to receive greater attention this session—is this year being forwarded free of charge to all League members whose e-mail addresses we know. It is the hope of the LWVWA Board and Lobby Team that, with this broader distribution of the League’s weekly newsletter, we will witness a growing member involvement in the legislative process.

This first issue has an unusual format—the entire newsletter is informational. Subsequent newsletters will consist mostly of brief alerts to bill action in the legislature, along with action recommendations from the League’s Lobby Team.

League was successful in 2006 in securing the passage of key bills we supported. However, there also were bills we wanted to see enacted that did not pass. Some of the latter might be reintroduced in 2007. Portfolio chairs will in the coming weeks examine these for our continuing support.

**The lobby team needs your assistance during the 2007 session to help secure passage of legislation supported by League policy positions. What you can do :**

- **Be sure to read the [Legislative Newsletter](#) for timely legislative **NEWS** and **alerts****
- **Make note of which [three legislators](#) represent your home district**
- **Plan to contact [portfolio chairs](#) about the status of bills League supports**

—Marilyn Johnston, LWVWA Lobby Team Coordinator [mfjhip@aol.com](mailto:mfjhip@aol.com)

### Clean Elections

On January 5 and 6, I attended "Clean Election Forums" in Seattle and Tacoma respectively. LWV Tacoma-Pierce County and LWVWA were among the co-sponsors of the Tacoma event. In addition to legislative representatives from the states of Maine and Arizona, where public financing systems are successfully operating, Washington state legislators Sen. Jim Kastama (District 25), Rep. Mark Miloscia (District 30), Rep. Shay Schual-Berke (District 33), Senator-elect Eric Oemig (District 45) and Antonio Ginatta (Gov. Gregoire's advisor for general government policy) participated in the discussion. They and **Washington Public Campaigns's** Policy Committee chair, John King, summarized public financing prospects for the 2007 legislative session.

Three public financing bills will be introduced during the upcoming session.

- A bill to lift the local ban on public campaign financing, similar to the bill that made a strong showing in the 2006 session and that would allow local governments to establish public financing systems, will be introduced in the House by Rep. Joe McDermott and in the Senate by Sen. Rosa Franklin. The prospects for passage of this bill, this year, are good and the City of Seattle is expected to be a strong ally in this effort.
- A bill to establish the option of public campaign financing for Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal candidates will be introduced in the House by Rep. Shay Schual-Berke at the request of Gov. Gregoire. The bill will propose a system modeled after North Carolina's public financing system for appellate court positions. This bill has a very good chance of passing due to the governor's support and legislative

momentum resulting from concerns for continued judicial independence after last year's unprecedented amount of money spent to influence the outcome of judicial position campaigns.

- Rep. Mark Miloscia and Sen. Jim Kastama will sponsor a comprehensive public campaign financing bill in the House and Senate respectively. This bill would create a full public financing system for all statewide and legislative positions. It has no chance of passing but has value as an informational bill.

I support all three public financing bills and recommend that the League particularly focus efforts on the judicial position bill because of the favorable prospects for passage and its statewide nature. Sen. Kastama, a longtime champion of public financing of campaigns, stated at the recent forum: "This issue cuts across all others—health care, education, tax reform, etc. It's the most important one. If you're going to work hard for one issue, this is the one."

I urge League members to make it known to their legislators, now, that they want public campaign financing legislation passed in 2007. Please feel free to contact me with questions or comments.

**Contact:** Chris Chamberlin, 253-761-1376, [bcchamberlin@harbornet.com](mailto:bcchamberlin@harbornet.com)

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### Priorities for a Healthy Washington

Four environmental priorities for 2007 have been selected by the executive directors of the organizations participating in the Priorities for a Health Washington coalition (LWVWA is a participant—see list at right) and approved by their respective organizations. These organizations will be working together and speaking with a unified voice in Olympia as we seek passage of this legislation. Your help is essential in contacting legislators to urge their support. For up-to-date information about these priorities, please see this website: [www.environmentalpriorities.org](http://www.environmentalpriorities.org)

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| The following organizations participate in Priorities for a Healthy Washington: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Rivers</li><li>• Audubon Washington</li><li>• Center for Environmental Law &amp; Policy</li><li>• Climate Solutions</li><li>• Conservation Northwest</li><li>• Earth Ministry</li><li>• Futurewise</li><li>• Heart of American Northwest</li><li>• League of Women Voters of Washington</li><li>• Northwest Energy Coalition</li><li>• People for Puget Sound</li><li>• Puget Soundkeeper Alliance</li><li>• Sierra Club Cascade Chapter</li><li>• The Nature Conservancy of Washington</li><li>• Transportation Choices Coalition</li><li>• Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation</li><li>• Washington Conservation Voters</li><li>• Washington Environmental Council</li><li>• Washington Toxics Coalition</li><li>• Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition</li></ul> |
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- **“Save Our Sound”** This is the third year that Puget Sound restoration and clean-up has been a priority. In addition to restoration, this year’s legislative focus will be on securing increased funding for a new Puget Sound agency that will take leadership, maintain oversight, and hold accountable those responsible for results over the long term. The legislation will seek to implement recommendations made by last year’s work of the Puget Sound Partnership appointed by Gov. Gregoire.
- **“\$100 Million for the Wildlife and Recreation Program”** The goal is to preserve additional places for parks and wildlife across the state by increasing our two-year investment to \$100 million from the present \$50 million (funding has been at the present level since the program’s inception in 1990). As our state’s population grows, so too does the need for recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and farmland. We have an opportunity in 2007 to protect those places that make Washington special and enhance our much-envied quality of life.
- **“Eliminate Toxic Flame Retardants”** Serious health concerns—for children and wildlife—are linked to industrial chemicals used as flame retardants known as PBDEs. High levels of these chemicals have been found in Washington residents, mothers’ breast milk, household dust, Puget Sound orcas and salmon, and the Spokane River. These chemicals should be banned in favor of safer effective alternatives already in use so we can have fire protection without poisons. **This bill (also in its third year as a priority) is on a fast track for passage with hearing set in both the Senate and House committees the first week of session. Please let your legislators know your support THIS WEEK.**
- **“Clean Air / Clean Fuels”** Washington can become a dynamic, competitive leader in growing the clean fuel industry. The 2007 Clean Air/Clean Fuels package builds on successful passage of the clean cars bill in '05 and the biofuels bill in '06. It encourages energy independence by providing incentives for Washington

farmers to produce the most promising new biofuel feedstocks; reduces fuel consumption and costs for state fleets; protects our kids by cleaning up dirty diesel school buses; promotes advanced vehicle technology; and helps the state guard against health threats from global warming.

**Contact:** Elizabeth Davis, 360-331-4184, [elizabethd@whidbey.com](mailto:elizabethd@whidbey.com)

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## SHORELINES

The Save Our Sound campaign (one of the four Priorities for a Healthy Washington for the 2007 legislative session) has coalesced around Gov Gregoire's proposal (announced December 13) to put Puget Sound on the path to recovery by 2020. The governor will be asking the legislature for \$220 million (for the biennium) for new investments in protecting and restoring Puget Sound. This is a ten-fold increase in the amount designated for this purpose in the last state biennial budget adopted in 2005.

Gov. Gregoire will be asking the legislature to pass legislation to repair septic systems, clean up polluted shellfish beds, phase out toxic flame retardants, and create a new governance system consistent with the recommendations of the Puget Sound Partnership. The actual bill drafts, especially the new governance piece, is still being worked on. We anticipate being able to support the legislation, and will be following the progress of the legislation carefully starting this week with two briefings before the House Select Committee on Puget Sound. One briefing will be on the history and economy of the Sound, and the other will ask, "What is wrong with the Sound?"

The governor's budget proposals are complete. Of the \$220 million, 82% is targeted toward action on-the-ground or in-the-Sound, including \$54 million to prevent and clean up toxic pollution; \$37 million is for restoring shorelines and other damaged habitats; and \$25 million is for aiding local governments in addressing stormwater pollution.

It promises to be a very exciting legislative session, full of opportunities to put Puget Sound on the path to recovery by 2020.

**Contact:** Ann Aagaard, 425-488-8418, [aagaarda@nwlinc.com](mailto:aagaarda@nwlinc.com)

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## Secretary of State's Legislative Priorities/Elections

Secretary of State Sam Reed has announced a four-part election reform package. The parts are briefly summarized below:

- Online voter registration. If passed, this legislation would allow voters who have a Washington state driver's license or state identification card to register online. Citizens would be required to give first and last names, date of birth, address, driver's license/state identification numbers. There would be proper safeguards in place, similar to what banks use to ensure accuracy and integrity of financial transactions.
- Votes would be counted even if party affiliation is not identified on primary ballot. This legislation would ensure that voters who fail to check a party box in the partisan primary will still get their votes counted. Approximately nine percent of those who voted on consolidated ballots (those containing both parties' candidates) failed to check a party preference, thus invalidating all partisan votes on those ballots. This solution would permit counties to count the partisan votes in cases where a voter failed to mark a party, but has voted a straight party ticket.
- Primary election voters pamphlet. This proposed legislation would require that the state publish a primary voters pamphlet in each even-numbered year. Sec. Reed reasons that, since many important judicial races are decided in the primary, a primary voters pamphlet is needed by the voters.
- Elimination of the unaffiliated ballot in the presidential preference primary. Historically the political parties do not count presidential preference votes on unaffiliated ballots. In the last presidential primary about forty percent of the ballots cast were unaffiliated and were therefore not counted. Voters would need to choose a ballot from a major political party in order to vote their presidential preference.

**Contact:** Betty Sullivan 206-682-5240 [jaybetty2@msn.com](mailto:jaybetty2@msn.com)

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## Restoration of Ex-Felon Voting Rights

The ACLU, Secretary of State, Auditors' Association, and County Clerks' Association are among the groups sponsoring efforts to restore voting rights for ex-felons. The groups are promoting automatic restoration of voting rights for convicted felons not housed full-time in a state corrections facility. Those on work release, electronically monitored, or in county detention facilities would have their voting rights restored.

The process that exists today requires an ex-felon to follow a time-consuming process and to satisfy all fines and court costs before being able to register to vote again. Bills are being drafted in both the Senate and House. It appears that Sen. Kohl-Welles and Rep. Jeannie Darneille will sponsor the legislation.

**Contact:** Betty Sullivan 206-682-5240 [jaybetty2@msn.com](mailto:jaybetty2@msn.com)

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## Washington's 2007–09 Biennial Budget

The state is in the enviable position of projecting a revenue surplus for the 2007-09 biennium; however, economic projections for the out years show the surpluses quickly turning into deficits, so the dance in Olympia this session will be characterized by the tension between responding to pent up demands for government services and exercising spending restraint to maintain revenue reserves.

The governor's proposed 2007-09 budget assumes reserves of \$1.9 billion. She proposes spending \$1.3 billion of that in a \$29.94 billion General Fund, leaving \$600 million in reserves. She would transfer \$262 million of the reserves to a new, constitutionally-created "rainy day fund." While most of the legislature's leaders support the idea of such a fund, there will be disagreement over how it should be established and used.

There are no significant tax increases in her budget. It does include a small B&O tax credit for high technology research and development, and a rural county tax credit (also small).

Next steps in the budget process will be the House and Senate producing their own proposed budgets; then, a conference committee will present a joint budget proposal for passage and delivery to the governor for her signature or veto. For a detailed description of the governor's budget, go to

[www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/WM](http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/WM)

**Contact:** Barbara Bush, 425-349-5184, [omi.bush@verizon.net](mailto:omi.bush@verizon.net)

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## Children's Issues

For the past several months we have been attending the meetings of [Washington Learns and the Early Learning Council](#). We are pleased that the recently released Washington Learns report offers a new way of thinking about education by proposing to redesign and reinvest in education from birth to higher education. This report can now be enacted by the legislators as they go through the lawmaking process beginning January 8. The Children's Issues portfolio priority this legislative session is in this report—the quality rating & improvement system (QRIS) that is tied to a tiered reimbursement for child care programs.

The governor's budget item for the Department of Early Learning (DEL) provides \$9.3 million to fund the QRIS. This voluntary rating system would give information to the community/parents about the type and quality of child care programs. Child care providers would have a rating system with five levels each of which could be achieved by taking realistic steps to improve one's child care program. Also, technical assistance, training materials, scholarships, mentoring, and accreditation fee grants would be available to help providers improve the quality of their child care services. A committee would assist in developing the QRIS and provide ongoing advice to the DEL.

The text of a QRIS bill will soon be available so that legislators can express their opinions and the public can have input into how this new system will work. We will be reporting on this development in future issues of the newsletter.

**Contact:** Marjorie Reeves, 360-866-7507, [mpreeves@comcast.net](mailto:mpreeves@comcast.net)  
and Pat Dickason, 360-725-4680, [pdickason@earthlink.com](mailto:pdickason@earthlink.com)

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## TAXES

Pre-filed tax bills include several tax exemptions, and we can expect to see more. In addition, **HB 1012** would provide an annual sales and use tax holiday for purchases of school related items. **SB 5001** would reenact and reaffirm Initiative 747, which limits regular property tax levies to a maximum of one percent higher than the previous year. **SB 5000**, introduced by Sen. Zarelli, would enact a rainy day fund. Rep. McIntire is planning to introduce a comprehensive tax reform bill; details are not yet available. Other proposals likely to be introduced include: property tax homestead exemption; windfall profits tax on big oil companies; payroll tax proposal to cover health insurance; payroll tax proposal to cover family leave; and various business tax reforms.

If you have questions about tax or budget issues, you may contact me. If you have particular interest in these issues, and would be willing to serve on a contact group, please let me know.

**Contact:** Barbara Bush, 425-349-5184, [omi.bush@verizon.net](mailto:omi.bush@verizon.net)

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## EDUCATION

The education legislation left on the table last year was the simple majority bill. Two bills, **HJR 4201** and **SJR 8202**, have already been pre-filed, and we are optimistic that 2007 will be the year that Washington citizens will be able to vote on a constitutional amendment to allow school levies to pass by a simple majority.

We will be advocating again this year for a plan to fully fund basic education as defined by the 1993 education reform legislation. We expect to spend a good bit of time at hearings held by a newly created **House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education**.

We could use league members across the state to help educate the public and their legislators on the issues of education funding and simple majority. Please contact us.

**Contact:** Catherine Ahl, 360-697-7924, [cathahl@hotmail.com](mailto:cathahl@hotmail.com)  
or Nancy Jander, 253-851-9260, [nancyjander@comcast.net](mailto:nancyjander@comcast.net)

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## TRANSPORTATION

The focus of transportation issues in the legislature this session will be how to fund the mega-projects in the Central Puget Sound region. These include the replacement of the SR 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct along the Seattle waterfront and the SR 520 Evergreen Point Floating Bridge across Lake Washington. Both are at risk of further earthquake damage.

Gov. Gregoire has asked Seattle to vote on a preferred alternative on the Viaduct replacement which at this point is (option 1) to tear it down and rebuild it, or (option 2) to replace it with a much more expensive cut and cover tunnel along the waterfront. Some hope either for no vote to occur in such a short time frame or else for more options. Even the \$2.4 billion from the 9.5-cent gas tax increase allocated by the legislature last year for a rebuild falls short because of rising costs. The same applies to the 520 Floating Bridge project. The allocation there was at least a couple of billion dollars short of replacement costs.

The legislature is listening to the recommendations of the expert review panel that has urged a more accurate range of probable estimated costs. Cost overruns are occurring on some of the "nickel" gas tax projects, and maintaining those existing projects will be a challenge unless they can be extended or some of the under-budget projects can help compensate.

Bills will be introduced in the legislature to include tolling as a source of funding and as a way to manage congestion during commute hours with an automatic billing system. The legislature is also looking at public/private funding and design/build contracts to cut the state's costs.

The Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) is required to go to a November 2007 vote along with Sound Transit's Phase II Plan to extend light rail to the University of Washington and possible over I-90 to

Redmond. This would involve regional funding only. RTID funds are primarily gas tax; Sound Transit is primarily sales tax.

The Transportation Governance Commission headed by Norman Rice has not received very enthusiastic support in the same legislature that created the commission last year. Their recommendation for a newly elected umbrella organization to set priorities has some people saying that it would just be another bureaucracy.

**Contact:** Pat Matteson 206-232-8028 [patriciaplm@cs.com](mailto:patriciaplm@cs.com)

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## GLOBAL WARMING

New issues for the 2007 session:

1. Encouraging energy independence for Washington (this top priority is also known as “Clean Air/Clean Fuels package”)
  - providing incentives for Washington farmers to produce the most promising new biofuel feedstocks
  - reducing fuel consumption and costs for state fleets
  - protecting our kids by cleaning up dirty diesel school buses
  - promoting advanced vehicle technology
  - helping the state guard against health threats from global warming
2. Creating a sustainable energy trust
3. Increasing the availability of alternative fuels at retail fuel stations
4. Reducing the sales tax on biofuels
5. Requiring most state agencies to purchase some qualified alternative energy

**Contact:** Toni Potter 206-365-8949 [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net)

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## ENERGY

Last session the state enacted into law the following:

1. A requirement that all diesel fuel and gasoline sold in our state have two percent and two-and-a-half percent biofuel content within the next two to three years
2. A bio-energy loan program
3. Tax exemptions on sales of solar hot water equipment
4. Net metering to enable more customers to sell their excess power to utilities
5. A requirement that utilities submit plans which explain the mix of sources for generation

Issues that will be reintroduced:

1. Requiring any state agency that is served by a public or private utility to purchase all available anaerobic digestion power from the local electric utility
2. Requiring a study of the economic and technical viability of building a large-scale, public-demonstration, solar electric generating facility.
3. Offering a one-dollar reduction of the b& o tax to businesses for every ton of greenhouse gases mitigated
4. Creating a roadmap for energy conservation and efficiency for Washington state
5. Creating a moratorium on new coal-fired electric generating facilities and requiring mitigation of greenhouse gases emitted by those that already exist

**Contact:** Toni Potter 206-365-8949 [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net)

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## FOR REFERENCE

### **K**ey Session Dates

The 60<sup>th</sup> Washington State Legislature opened its long session on Monday, January 8. The 2007 legislative session in Olympia runs from January 8 to April 22. Every day (including Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) is counted in the 105-day session. The Lobby Team will meet regularly during the session to talk with the League lobbyist, Lonnie Johns-Brown, and to decide on priority action for the upcoming week.

### **C**ONTACT LISTS

Portfolio chairs / Lobby Team – [www.lwwa.org/about/officers.html](http://www.lwwa.org/about/officers.html)

Legislators – [www.lwwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/Legislators.pdf](http://www.lwwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/Legislators.pdf)

Representation by legislative district – [www.lwwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/DistrictReps.pdf](http://www.lwwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/DistrictReps.pdf)

### **L**EAGUE POSITIONS

LWVWA positions – [www.lwwa.org/advocacy/prog\\_in\\_action05-07.html](http://www.lwwa.org/advocacy/prog_in_action05-07.html)

### **R**ESOURCES

League action website – [lwwa.org/advocacy](http://lwwa.org/advocacy)

House Floor Activity as it happens – [flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov/default.aspx?chamber=3](http://flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov/default.aspx?chamber=3)

Senate Floor Activity as it happens – [flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov](http://flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov)

Public hearings as they happen – [twv.org](http://twv.org)

Bill information – text, analysis, status, committee action – [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo)

Bill room (legislative information center) – **360-786-7573**

State budget information – [www.ofm.wa.gov](http://www.ofm.wa.gov)

Governor's website – [governor.wa.gov](http://governor.wa.gov)

Washington state's official website – [access.wa.gov](http://access.wa.gov)

#### **Speaking to a Legislator**

Visit, write to, call, or email the legislator directly (see contact list for legislators). Or, use the toll-free Legislative Hotline available weekdays from 8:00 am - 8:00 pm, and Saturdays from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm:

**800-562-6000** / TTY: 800-635-9993

Legislative hotline operators will send your message to one of your legislators, all three of your legislators, the governor and lieutenant governor, or all of these, as you request. Language translation services are also available. Person placing the call needs to know enough English to understand "Please Wait" and to report the language needed.

#### **Addressing a Letter to a Legislator**

Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Senator \_\_\_\_\_

P.O. Box 40600 P.O. Box 404[leg district]

Olympia, WA 98504-0600 Olympia, WA 98504-04[leg district]

#### **Visiting Your Legislators**

Citizens are welcome to visit their legislators in Olympia on any day during the session. Making an appointment first is prudent but not always required. Later in the session, town hall meetings back in the legislators' home districts are good opportunities for talking to your legislators. Lobby day events provide organized support for visits.