



# League of Women Voters of Washington

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

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## 2008 Legislature Session Wrap-up

For this final, wrap-up newsletter I'd like to pass out a few bouquets:

- 🌸 to the Lobby Team members for preparing and delivering testimony, attending hearings and legislative sessions, writing weekly reports that kept everyone informed and activated, lobbying legislators all session long, and remaining passionate about their issues
- 🌸 to Laura McCarty, our newsletter editor, for producing a newsletter that made it easy for our members to get the information and respond to action calls
- 🌸 to the Lake Washington East Unit of LWV Seattle and to LWV Thurston County for their excellent work in organizing Action Workshop and Lobby Day, respectively
- 🌸 to the members and friends who supported our lobbying efforts with your donations to the Action Letter
- 🌸 to all of you who visited, called, or emailed your legislators.

We saw the results of our collective efforts this year We DO make a difference.

Barb Bush  
Action Chair

### CHILDREN'S ISSUES

#### Margie Reeves & Pat Dickason

After getting a Family Leave Insurance law ([RCW 49.86](#)) passed in 2007, supporters succeeded in obtaining start-up funding in the 2008 supplemental budget for the insurance program. Amount of this funding is \$6.2 million. This will give legislators time to find further funding during the 2009 session. Administration of the program also changed this year, but the benefits remain the same as previously reported. All parents (of newborn or newly adopted children) who have worked at least 680 hours the previous year are eligible for the program. The benefits are \$250 per week for up to five weeks. In companies with more than twenty-five employees, there will be job protection for workers who have been working there for at least a year. The League position that supports our work on this issue is that the physical and emotional security of the child shall be paramount. Stay tuned for more about family leave in the 2009 legislative session.

**HB 3168** (Washington Head Start) was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor, and \$250,000 was appropriated to develop the Washington Head Start proposal. Amendments which were added in the Senate and accepted unanimously by the House do the following:

- Require the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop a proposal for implementing a statewide Washington Head Start program
- Delay the due date for DEL's report to the legislature by one year (to December 1, 2009)
- Remove a requirement included in earlier versions of the bill to identify and report on implementation of state-supported pilot programs modeled after the federal Head Start program
- Modify the intent language that describes the legislature's goals for the outcomes of this bill.

The League position that supports our work on Washington Head Start is that we support action to create stable and adequate funding for children at risk.

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## **EDUCATION**

### **Catherine Ahl**

Two of our legislative priorities for 2008 were (1) adequate funding for civics education and testing, and (2) a plan to amply fund basic education. Our priority of getting professional development funding for social studies teachers did not succeed this year. It had been our hope that teachers could receive training before the mandated civics education and classroom-based assessments (CBAs) begin next school year. **Nevertheless, because of the efforts of LWVWA members, more legislators are aware of the need. HB 2781** (enhancing Washington state history and government course requirements for high school graduation) passed and was signed by the governor. As a result of this legislation, course requirements must include the following topics: Washington state commerce, politics, geography, history, and culture; and the state's Constitution. The bill also encourages instruction on the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance oath. The bill is a bit redundant since teachers already have to follow the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), which include history, geography, civics, and economics; and Washington state history and government can be taken as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> grade for high school credit for graduation.

The **Joint Task Force on Basic Education**, established by the state legislature last session to recommend a new plan for funding K-12 education, has held three meetings this year. The January meeting consisted of reports, the March meeting addressed questions regarding compensation, and the April meeting continued that discussion. A bill that was passed this session and signed by the governor, **SB 6879** (joint task force on basic education finance), updates the original legislation establishing the task force and requires that it make a final report to the legislature by December 1, 2008. It remains to be seen if this can be accomplished. The legislation establishing the task force also required a report from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) by December 1, 2007, on options for school employee compensation and for implementing legislation. Data was provided but no plans, and now the task force is addressing that. WSIPP's final report of options for revising the K-12 funding structure is now due to the task force by September 15, 2008. Lastly, the bill also stipulates that in light of recent court decisions (the Federal Way School District law suit), the task force shall specifically consider issues related to equalizing school employee salary allocations among school districts.

**SB 6818**, directing the state to make publicly available a searchable state expenditure information website, passed but was partially vetoed by the governor. She vetoed Section 4, which included examples of the type and level of education programs and services supported by state funding. In her veto statement, the governor said, "The Joint Task Force on Basic Education is currently reviewing basic education funding and will produce a recommendation for the new K-12 funding framework for consideration by the Legislature during the 2009 session. Because the categories and cost allocations in Section 4 will be outdated and need to be changed very soon, I am concerned that this provision could cause more confusion about how the state funds K-12 education."

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## **ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Toni Potter & Marian Wineman**

The bills listed below passed both houses of the legislature and were signed by the governor. We followed about six times as many bills, but mostly because of budget and time constraints those did not pass.

- **HB 2815** (provide a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Washington economy) requires reporting and limits on greenhouse gases emissions and provides for green collar jobs. Prime sponsor: Rep. Hans Dunshee.
- **HB 2847** (create a sales and use tax exemption of materials and services used in weatherization) exempts tangible items from sales and use taxes if the items are used in weatherizing homes of low-income residents of Washington state (see **U.S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program**). Prime sponsor: Rep. Timm Ormsby.

- **HB 3362** (provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to purchase highly energy efficient equipment) establishes a new tax credit against state B&O tax for certain small businesses for purchases of certain types of commercial kitchen appliances that carry certain energy efficiency ratings. Prime sponsor: Rep. Troy Kelley.
- **SB 6111** (look at generating electricity from tidal and wave energy) instructs Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and the **Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council** to create a tidal and wave energy work group that includes representation from state agencies, private sector firms and associations, university researchers, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, electrical utility, local government, commercial fishing industry, and conservations groups related to energy and marine ecology/recreation. Prime sponsor: Sen. Steve Hobbs.

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**HEALTH CARE**  
**Ann L. Brand, PhD**

The legislative priority we selected for this short legislative session was to support legislation that would improve access to health care. Several key pieces of legislation were passed that will move the state forward, and budget provisos advanced several other initiatives. However, one critical bill that passed in the Senate failed to win approval in the House.

The biggest disappointment of this legislative session for health care advocates, and, if polling data are to be believed, for Washington health care consumers in general, was the failure to pass **HB 2664** — a bill that prohibits the sale and use of prescriber-identifiable records for marketing purposes. The bill received broad-based support from physician, health, and consumer groups. The companion bill, SB 6241, passed in the Senate. But HB 2664 failed to pass in the House.

**SB 6333** (establishing a citizens' work group on health care) went through several significant amendments before its final passage and signing into law by Gov. Gregoire on April 1. Many supporters for health care reform view this bill as a critical step because it establishes and funds an independent evaluation of a number of health care proposals. By December 2008, the results of the evaluation are due to the governor, the legislature, and the citizens' work group established by this bill. After January 2009, the governor will appoint the members of the Washington Citizens' Work Group on Health Care Reform. This group will review the analysis of the health reform proposals and engage in a public process to involve people across the state in discussion of the issues. The work group will then submit a final report to the governor and legislature by November 1, 2009, with a summary of the public engagement process and the work group recommendations.

**SB 5261** (restoring the authority of the state insurance commissioner to review individual health benefit plan rates) was passed and signed into law. This is a big step forward for consumers who have seen the rates for individual health care premiums skyrocket in the last several years. This bill restores the ability of the **Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner** to review and approve proposals by insurance plans to raise rates in the individual insurance market. Limiting premium rate increases to a reasonable level is expected to limit the erosion of access to health care for people insured in this market.

**HB 2549** (concerning a medical home model of primary care) received sufficient funding to implement a pilot project for primary care medical homes, based on the Washington State Department of Health's current **Collaborative to Improve Health**. The project will utilize the collaborative approach to implement a medical home delivery of primary care in at least twenty practices.

Supplemental budget actions that improve health care access include:

- *Continuing the Full Implementation of Cover All Kids (SB 5093 passed in 2007)*: \$6.25 million was added in the 2008 supplemental budget for community mental health services for people not covered by Medicaid. A significant portion of these funds will be dedicated to meeting children's mental health needs.
- *Increasing Availability of Primary Care Physicians*: Legislators responded to the shortage of primary care physicians by providing \$1.25 million to expand the Washington State Health Professional Loan Repayment

and Scholarship Program. This funding will help in the retention of twenty additional primary care providers and provide training to forty additional providers. This is seen as a big victory for underserved communities across the state.

- *Subsidies for low wage employees of small employers:* The legislature allocated \$750,000 under the Health Insurance Partnership to increase access to health insurance for employees of small businesses.

**This wrap-up report gives me the opportunity to THANK YOU for all of your efforts in letting legislators know what is important to you. The old truism that “it could not be done without you” is as applicable now as ever. Keep up the good work, and we will prevail.** The next session will see a lot of activity on the health care front, and we need everyone in the trenches.

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## **HOME ENVIRONMENT**

**John Roberts**

The LWVWA worked with the **American Lung Association of Washington** and **Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility** to obtain \$315,000 from the 2008 legislature to help more than 600 low-income Medicaid children with moderate to severe asthma in Pierce County. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful because of a shortage of money, even though there would be a \$1.70 in reduced medical costs for each dollar spent. To save this money and the children, you need the money up front. Any business would rush to borrow money at 6% to get a 170% return. An effort will continue to be made to understand and reduce the state and federal barriers to reducing asthma health costs and financing sound investments in the health of our children.

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## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Elizabeth Davis**

**HB 2647** (the Children's Safe Products Act) flew through the House, 95-2, did well in the Senate, passing 40-9, and re-passed the House 92-2. The bill applies to children's toys and products (bibs to cribs, cosmetics and jewelry, and more) intended for use by or care for children, with the age of children defined in the bill as those under the age of 12. Then, the national toy industry got wind of what was happening in Washington state and began putting pressure on the governor to veto the bill. It was a wild and tense period for three weeks. The governor finally signed the bill, with a veto of two sections. While those sections are important, they are not critical to what the bill's intent is. Key provisions include:

- After July 1, 2009, no children's toy or product may be sold or distributed in Washington that contains more than .009% by weight of lead, more than .004% by weight of cadmium, or more than 0.10% by weight of phthalates.
- The standard for lead may be reduced to .0004% if determined feasible by the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Health.
- By January 1, 2009, the Washington State Department of Ecology shall identify high priority chemicals that are of high concern for children, together with children's products that may contain these chemicals. The department also shall submit a report on these to the legislature for its consideration of possible future action.

The bill has been called the toughest safe toy bill in the nation. In her veto message, the governor indicated that she would be establishing an advisory group to look further into the issues raised by toxics in toys and children's products, to make recommendations for implementation of the provisions of the bill, and to look at possible additional legislation.

The 2008 legislative session brought great achievements for a healthier state with passage of all four "Priorities for a Healthy Washington" environmental priorities. **Priorities for a Healthy Washington** is a coalition of twenty-four environmental, good government, faith, and civic organizations working together and speaking with one voice for environmental legislation in Olympia. **LWVWA is a member.** The coalition selects four environmental priorities each year, with 2008 being the fifth legislative year for this coalition.

1. *Climate Action, Green Jobs* sets the state on course to enact a market-based system, with the other Western states, to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by certain specified dates. Funds are provided to increase green jobs, which are those in the alternative energy and green building sectors of the state economy. Entities that are large sources of global warming pollution will have to make regular reports concerning their emissions. It establishes benchmarks for reducing vehicle miles traveled under the Washington State Department of Transportation.
2. *Local Solutions to Global Warming* develops tools that will help local governments make land use and zoning decisions that reduce driving and meet the growing demand for green, walkable communities. It amends the Growth Management Act (GMA) to create a range of climate change response methodologies and a computer modeling program that estimates the greenhouse gas reductions resulting from various land use and transportation planning strategies. This is to be coordinated with the Washington State Department of Transportation to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). A small competitive grants program is created, and a stakeholders' process is established to study further planning recommendations. **SB 6580**, after rather jarring setbacks, was finally signed by the governor. This bill sets in motion important first steps to help local governments reduce their climate impact through land use and transportation planning. Due to funding constraints, a key section of the bill which authorizes the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) to develop a monitoring tool to measure, inventory, and estimate greenhouse gas emissions related to land use decisions was almost subject to a last-minute veto by the governor. League and other members of the Priorities for Healthy Washington coalition lobbied the governor's office to keep this important section of the bill in place. Now, CTED is setting up an advisory committee (also required by the bill) to recommend appropriate first steps for local governments to reduce their impact on global warming. Not part of this year's bill is a climate change goal to be added to the GMA. League portfolio chairs on climate change, land use, and natural resources, along with other stakeholders who helped pass the bill, will follow the proposals of the advisory committee. CTED's Local Solutions Advisory Committee meetings will be held in various locations around the state over the next six months (five meetings) with a report due December 2008. (Thanks go to Ann Aagaard for the information in this report on the Local Solutions to Global Warming legislation and for following its progress for the League during this session.)
3. *Local Farms, Healthy Kids* (**SB 6483**) made it through the legislative processes relatively unscathed and unchanged from the original filing of the bill. A broad coalition of environmental, farming, school, and public health interests (together with being one of the Priorities for a Healthy Washington) successfully worked together for its passage. This bringing together of many different interests was represented by the first panel testifying in favor of the bill before the Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: representatives of Priorities for a Healthy Washington, the Washington Farm Bureau, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Key components of the bill are:
  - Eases state and school procurement restrictions to better enable school districts and state entities to choose local foods.
  - Establishes a Farm to School Program that will facilitate the purchasing of Washington-grown farm products by schools.
  - Creates the Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, and provides \$600,000 per year in grants to elementary schools with high numbers of low-income students for making such food available to them
  - Promotes school gardens providing fresh food for students
  - Establishes a Farmers Market Technology Program, providing \$50,000 to allow farmers markets to accept food stamps and credit cards
  - Establishes three Farm to Food Bank pilot programs allowing food banks to contract with farmers for fresh, locally-grown food
  - Expands and increases funding for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program
4. *Evergreen Communities* promotes protection, preservation and procreation of forests and trees in communities throughout the state. The Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) will develop model ordinances for cities and counties to use. Some pilot projects will be chosen for existing or proposed implementation of such ordinances. In addition to the benefits of water retention, reduced flooding and soil erosion, and air pollutant absorption, increased and healthy forests retain global warming gases.

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## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Wayne Martin

It was a quiet session. We were able to block all four of the bills we opposed. Three bills about the Pharmacy Board issue died without a hearing, as did the bill which would have required abortion providers to tell their clients that abortions were associated with many severe complications (all of which claims are not true). However, we were not able to pass the bill we targeted for passage, namely, legislation that would have removed the requirement that the Washington State Department of Health apply for "abstinence-only" funding. Funding for family planning came in at \$5 million. Given the state of the state's finances, this was probably as good as we could do. As for next year, I think the Department of Health bill will be submitted and funding for family planning will continue.

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## TAXES

Barbara Bush

The major piece of tax legislation that passed in the 2008 session was the Working Families Credit, strongly supported by LWVWA. The measure, based on the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, authorizes a sales tax rebate equal to 5 percent of the Earned Income Tax Credit (during 2009 and 2010) and 10 percent (during 2011 and thereafter) for persons who qualify for the EITC (low-income). A last-minute compromise amendment requires that money for the program must be approved by the legislature in each two-year budget.

LWVWA supported the measure because, by reducing the state tax burden on low income persons, Washington's tax system is made less regressive. We still have a long way to go to achieve the balanced system LWVWA policy envisions.

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## TRANSPORTATION

Pat Matteson

All of our high priority transportation bills passed and were signed by the governor. Also, ground-breaking legislation was passed that creates a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our state. The goal there is for the transportation sector to reduce by half the annual per capita vehicle miles traveled by 2050.

Projects that seemed feasible a few years ago with existing funding (that is, with the Nickel Fund) have had to be delayed or cut because of huge increases in raw material and other costs. The Puget Sound region faces enormous problems in replacing an aging SR 520 Floating Bridge across Lake Washington and a State Route Alaskan Way Viaduct that is susceptible to earthquake damage. Both of these mega-projects, with estimated costs in the billions of dollars, are crucial to our safety and to Washington state's economy.

Initiative 960 (passed last year by the state's voters) requires the state to determine a 10-year cost to taxpayers of any proposed legislation that would increase taxes or fees, and then to inform the voters about it. The initiative also requires a two-thirds vote of the legislature to pass such a fee or tax increase. With these hurdles, it was difficult to pass bills this session to fund our transportation infrastructure. However, with the state committing two billion dollars for the SR 520 project and initiating tolls to cover the other half of the project costs, the transportation committees in our state legislature succeeded in passing legislation to fund this transportation mega-project.

Fortunately, careful legislation during this session succeeded in by-passing restrictions imposed by Initiative 960 enough to get a bill passed, [HB 1773](#), which identifies tolling as the means to provide a supplementary source of funding for such projects. Tolling is to be studied to determine the effects on other corridors and the advisability

of long term tolling on the existing bridge or bridges (SR-520 and I-90). This idea is expected to save the state millions of dollars in inflationary construction costs. Also passed was **HB 3096**, which helps enable SR-520 bridge replacement project financing.

**HB 2730**, a non-controversial bill to enable passenger-only ferry service to the Port of Kingston, passed unanimously. HB 2730 assures the award of a \$3.5 million federal grant for capital needs. However, the bill requiring the Washington State Transportation Commission to consider the desirability of reasonable fares for frequent ferry users did not pass, although the transportation budget does include that directive.

The bill to study the commuter rail services for the Burlington Northern rail sale to the Port of Seattle and to plan for potential uses in the public sector passed, was signed by the governor, and is supported by \$100,000 in the budget.

A big thank you ought to go to the chairs of the House and Senate transportation committees, Rep. Judy Clibborn and Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen respectively. Rep. Fred Jarrett also deserves a thank you, as he was instrumental in getting bipartisan wording and the compromises necessary to enable passage of HB 3096 (one of the SR 520 financing bills).

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## **WATER**

### **Denise Smith**

There were several water bills introduced during this session but only a few made it out of the committee of origin. One of interest to the League that not only passed out of the committee of origin but also passed the legislature and was signed by the governor is **SB 6340** (providing for a water system acquisition and rehabilitation program). This bill asks the Washington State's Department of Health to report on a program that already has been operating successfully through that agency, namely, the **Water System Acquisition and Rehabilitation Program** (WSARP). WSARP is a program that "provides grants to municipal water systems to acquire and rehabilitate water systems with water quality problems or deteriorated infrastructure" (quote is from bill report on state legislature's website). SB 6340 will essentially formalize this program and allow for increased financial assistance.

Another bill which the League supported had an interesting although unsuccessful history this session. **SB 6593** (providing for groundwater monitoring and assessments) and a related house bill, **HB 2477**, both addressed the need to inventory the state's groundwater resources. The Senate bill directs Washington State Department of Ecology to collect and compile information on groundwater from other information sources such as the U.S. Geological Survey in order for the state to have a consistent program for groundwater management. Neither the House bill nor the Senate bill passed their house of origin, but the intent of the Senate bill was championed by Sen. Fraser and the text was added to the budget as a proviso. The proviso ultimately was vetoed by the governor along with thirty other provisos as a demonstration of fiscal responsibility when economic projections became dire. However, this issue will return because it has broad support.

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## FOR REFERENCE

### Key Session Dates

The 60th Washington State Legislature opened its short session on Monday, January 14. The 2008 legislative session in Olympia runs from January 14 to March 13. Every day (including Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) is counted in the 60-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.

**Jan. 14** - First day of regular session

**Feb. 1** - LWVWA Lobby Day

**Feb. 8** - Last day for any bill to be considered in **policy** committee of its “house of origin” (House for HB, or Senate for SB)

**Feb. 12** - Last day for any bill to be considered in **fiscal** committee of its “house of origin”

**Feb. 19** - Last day for bills to be considered on the floor of their “house of origin” (5 p.m.)

**Feb. 29** - Last day for bills to be considered in a **policy** committee of the opposite house (Senate for HB, or House for SB)

**Mar. 3** - Last day for bills to be considered in a **fiscal** committee of the opposite house

**Mar. 7** - Last day for bills to be considered on the floor of the opposite house (5 p.m.) except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implementing budgets, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session.

**Mar. 13** - Last day of regular session

### CONTACT LISTS

Portfolios / Lobby Team - [www.lwvwa.org/about/officers.html](http://www.lwvwa.org/about/officers.html)

Legislators - [www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/Legislators.pdf](http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/newsletters/Legislators.pdf)

Legislative Committees - [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/committeelisting.aspx](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/committeelisting.aspx)

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

### LEAGUE POSITIONS

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

### RESOURCES

League action website - [lwvwa.org/advocacy](http://lwvwa.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.