

# League of Women Voters of Washington

Barbara Seitle, President // Barbara L. Bush, Action Chair // Newsletter edited by Stasha McBride

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

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The Washington state legislature adjourned on April 26. Governor Gregoire has announced her intention to call the legislature into special session to complete business that she felt was unfinished. Negotiations are ongoing between the governor's office and legislative leaders to determine the length and scope of the special session.

## Action Items

### **HB 1517** – Restoration of voting rights

For people who were convicted of felonies and who have come out of the criminal justice system.

**Status** – The bill was originally passed by the House, amended in the Senate, and accepted by the House as amended. The amended bill provides that people who were convicted of felonies will have their voting rights restored provisionally when they come out of the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections. The provisional right to vote may be revoked by the sentencing court if the court finds that the person has willfully failed to pay his or her legal financial obligations. **SHB 1517** was signed by the Governor on May 4. LWVWA representatives were present at the bill signing.

**ACTION** – If Jeannie Darnielle or Jean Kohl-Welles represent your district, thank them for being the prime sponsors on this bill. Everyone send thanks to Secretary of State Sam Reid for his support and to Governor Gregoire.

**Contact** - Barbara Seitle, [bseitle@whidbey.net](mailto:bseitle@whidbey.net), 360 221 3792

### **2SSB 5945** – Washington Health Partnership plan – relating to health care reform

The bill was amended in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee. It still includes extending coverage to individuals below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The goal of achieving health care coverage for all Washingtonians by 2014 is contained in the bill. This bill keeps Washington State in a good position to take advantage of Federal funding for health care reform.

**League Position** - "Quality health care at an affordable cost" is a basic goal for health stated by the LWVUS. This bill moves us closer to affordable health care for all Washington residents.

**Status** – An amended **2SSB 5945** passed the House floor vote on April 16 and was sent to the Senate for possible concurrence. The Senate concurred and the bill was sent to the governor on April 25. It is awaiting the governor's signature.

**ACTION** – If Senator Karen Keiser or Representative Eileen Cody are one of your legislators, thank them for their leadership as chairs of the Senate and House Health Care Committees in supporting this legislation.

**Contact** - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbournet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbournet.com), 253 572 9305

### **SSB 5891** – Establishing a forum for testing primary care medical home reimbursements pilot programs

This bill would require the health care authority and DSHS to design, oversee implementation of, and evaluate one or more primary care medical home reimbursement pilot projects in the state. A medical home pilot project would include public payers, private health carriers, third party purchasers, and primary health care providers.

**League Position** – Health care system should provide seamless coverage and continuity of care. This bill encourages the medical home concept, which would provide continuity of care.

**Status** – This amended bill passed a floor vote in the House on April 8. It was sent to the Senate for possible concurrence. The Senate concurred, and the bill was sent to the governor on April 22. It is awaiting the

governor's signature.

**ACTION** – This bill had bipartisan support in the Senate and in the House. Thank your legislators for supporting the medical home concept, which will help to increase the number of primary care providers in our communities.

**Contact** - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com), 253 572 9305

## Issue Items

### GOVERNMENT

**HB 2377** – This bill would have increased the sales tax by 0.3 percent (3 cents on \$10) from January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2012. It would have provided funding for the Basic Health Plan, public health services, health care, mental health care, hospitals, and long-term care nursing homes. It would also have made funds available for the Working Families' Tax Exemption to offset some of the regressivity of the sales tax. Finally, the sales tax provision would have been sent to the voters as a referendum in November.

**Status** – **HB 2377** was heard in the House Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee on Friday, April 17. LWVWA testified in favor. The bill was reported out of committee, but was never brought to a vote of the House.

The 2009-11 Operating Budget was adopted as an all cuts budget.

**Contact** - Barbara Seitle, [bseitle@whidbey.net](mailto:bseitle@whidbey.net), 360 221 3792

**SB 5599** – National Popular Vote Compact approving the entry of Washington into the agreement among the states to elect the President by national popular vote.

**League Position** - LWV does not yet have a position on the National Popular Vote Compact. Local leagues are conducting consensus discussions with reports due to LWVUS in May.

**Status** - Passed the Legislature, and the Governor signed on April 28, making Washington state the 5<sup>th</sup> state to adopt the compact.

### HEALTH CARE

**Health Care Budget Items in 2009-11 Operating Budget Bills – HB 1244/ SB 5600** - As you well know there are many health care programs that may be cut in the 2009-2011 budget.

**League Position** – Ensure universal access for all residents to a comprehensive, uniform, and affordable set of health services...regardless of one's health status or financial status.

**Status** – The budget was reconciled by both the House and Senate and passed on April 25. There are a few bills that support the budget that were not passed by the end of the legislative session, which may need to be considered in a special session. In the budget General Assistance – Unemployable (GA-U) was not eliminated, but was reduced by about 18%. The Basic Health Plan was reduced by 42%, or 40,000 slots, without a way to raise revenue to fill this void in our health safety net. Family planning received a 10% cut, and there were also cuts in public health, long term care and mental health.

**Contact** - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com), 253 572 9305

### EDUCATION

Two of LWVWA's priorities for this legislative session involved education:

(1) Inclusion of a civics class in the Core 24 Graduation Requirements. This was accomplished through **HB 2132** which passed unanimously in both houses and was signed by the governor on April 25.

(2) A new K-12 Basic Education funding structure. This was accomplished with passage of **ESHB 2261** after a contentious debate in both houses, partly because any discussion of revenues was removed from the bill and the full implementation of the new provisions was delayed until September 2018. The expanded program of Basic Education that the state will fund includes increased instructional hours, 24 credits required for graduation, a new transportation funding formula, all-day kindergarten, early learning for at-risk students, and a highly-capable program. A Quality Education Council and a K-12 Data Governance Group will be

formed as well as four Working Groups to develop details of the funding formulas, early learning, employee compensation, and levies and levy equalization.

The 2009-11 budget passed by the legislature cut \$1.5B from education. The programs, grants, and pilot projects funded in the 2007-09 budget are either eliminated or drastically cut. I-728 is reduced by 75%. Class sizes will be increased and 3000-5000 teachers may lose their jobs. So while we celebrate a new funding structure for basic education that may be fully implemented by 2018, we will continue to worry about our children's education during the next nine years.

Contact: Catherine Ahl, [cathahl@hotmail.com](mailto:cathahl@hotmail.com), 360 697 7924

## TRANSPORTATION

Final passage of bills sent to the Governor:

**SB 5540** – High Capacity Transportation Corridor.

Establishing high capacity transportation corridor areas allowing transits to establish sub-taxing districts with voter approval for the purpose of funding projects like light rail and/or rapid transit. This bill was primarily introduced to facilitate Clark County's ability to fund light rail in the Vancouver area and across the bridge to Portland to connect to MAX.

**ESSB 5768** – SR number 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project.

The final design for the state route number 99 Alaskan Way viaduct replacement project as a deep bore tunnel and includes four general-purpose lanes in a stack formation. State funding is not to exceed \$2.4B and must also include \$400M in toll revenue. These funds must be used solely to build a replacement tunnel and to remove the existing viaduct structure. State funding may not be used for central seawall or for water front improvements. The City of Seattle must bear all utility relocation costs associated with the state work on the viaduct replacement project. An amendment was added to the bill that would charge property owners in the corridor for any cost overruns in excess of \$2.8B.

**ESHB 2211** – Tolling of the 520 Bridge Corridor.

The final bill authorizes early tolling, but limits the use of tolls to the center corridor. If tolls collected are not enough to back the \$1.95 bonds, then gas taxes will be used to make up the difference. The bill left open the possibility of tolling the I-90 corridor until such time as congestion deemed it necessary.

**ESSB 5352** – Transportation Budget Bill 2009-2011.

After a dispute was resolved in conference committee, the budget bill was passed with very little fanfare late Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. The major differences that were resolved in committee concerned the ferry service: how many vessels, what types and the timetable for procurement. \$254M was provided in the next two biennia for ferry construction. The first three ferries will be 64-car vessels, and will be delivered in three consecutive years beginning in 2010. If funds are available, a 144-car vessel could arrive as early as 2013. The Department's plan B was rejected, so there will be no cuts in service and fares are capped at 2.5% per annum. The Transportation Commission must be able to justify any increases in fares after exploring other ways of reducing operational costs. There is still much that will need clarifying later, as no sustainable future funding for the ferry service was identified in this budget, however the document does indicate the intent of the legislature and directs the Department to modify its long range plan.

Major projects such as the Alaskan Viaduct, the 520 bridge corridor, the Columbia River Crossing were all funded in the budget and other nickel package and TPA projects that were delayed because of diminished gas tax revenues have now been moved forward primarily due to the stimulus package; projects in Spokane, Tacoma, Tri-cities and Yakima to name a few.

Contact - Luella Wells, [lawells@wavecable.com](mailto:lawells@wavecable.com), 360 598 3267

## EARLY LEARNING

Many thanks to all LWVWA members who contacted their legislators on behalf of early learning issues this session, your voices helped legislators hear that early learning is important to a wide-ranging group of citizens.

Budget impacts that you helped support:

The budget looks to be fairly livable for Early Learning, although cuts were made to the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) which means **166 children will not be enrolled** for next year.

Funding of \$1.35M and \$850K stimulus was restored for Child Care Resource and Referral services that link parents with child care providers, support childcare providers, and offer provider training. This funding was originally omitted in the Governor's budget, as well as House and Senate budgets.

Bills with deferred funding that passed, with your help, include:

**ESHB 2261** (Basic Ed) passed the House and Senate and is expected to be signed by the Governor. This bill includes early learning in the definition of basic education, and is an important acknowledgement that learning occurs well before a child enters kindergarten.

**SHB 1943** passed the House and Senate and will be sent to the Governor for signature. This bill will help the early learning community develop a systemic approach to professional development/education for childcare providers.

**SB 6158** passed by delaying implementation for three more years, until October 2012. This historic legislation was approved in 2007 to grant workers up to five weeks of partial wage replacement of up to \$250 per week for the birth or adoption of a child. It was scheduled to begin in October this year but legislators couldn't find a way to pay for it.

Contact - Margie Reeves [mpreeves@comcast.net](mailto:mpreeves@comcast.net), Pat Dickason [p.dickason@comcast.net](mailto:p.dickason@comcast.net)

## ENERGY/CLIMATE CHANGE

Bills that have passed the legislature and await the Governor's signature:

**E2SSB 5854** – Reducing climate pollution in the built environment

1. The State Building Code Council must adopt State Energy Codes that require houses and buildings constructed from 2013-2031 to incrementally move towards at 70% reduction use by 2031.
2. CTED must develop a strategic plan for enhancing energy efficiency and reducing green house gases in homes, buildings, districts, and neighborhoods. CTED must recommend to the Legislature by December 31, 2009 an energy performance score for residential buildings.
3. By January 1, 2011 or 2012 any property owner or operator of a non-residential building must disclose energy performance data to any prospective buyers, lessees, or lenders.

**E2SSB 5649** – Regarding energy efficiency in buildings

1. WSU is authorized to implement grants – presumably federally funded – for pilot projects that provide community-wide, agricultural, and commercial energy efficiency upgrades with collaboration from CTED.
2. CTED must establish a process for awarding grants to financial institutions for the purpose of creating credit enhancements for energy efficiency services and projects.

Bills that have passed and been signed by the Governor:

**E2SHB 1007** Creating a sustainable energy trust

The Housing Finance Commission is directed, if economically feasible, to:

1. Issue bonds for the purpose of financing loans for qualified energy efficiency and renewable energy improvement projects;
2. Participate fully in federal and other governmental programs and take actions that secure to itself and the people of the state the benefits of programs to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

Bills that failed to pass:

**2SSB 5840** Energy Independence Act

We opposed this bill, and it did not pass because the Senate and House could not agree and ran out of time.

The bill would have amended Initiative 937 which was passed in 2006 and set certain percentages of utility generation that must be renewable energy, thereby increasing clean energy and green jobs and decreasing climate change. In its worst form, the bill would have changed the intent of the initiative from increasing new renewable energy such as wind and solar to counting all hydrogenation in the required percentages. We do not believe it will be dealt with in the special session, but if it is, we will send an alert.

**E2SSB 5735** Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This bill was passed in different forms by the Senate and House, but time ran out for a concurrence. In its original form, it was referred to as the Cap and Invest Bill or the Cap and Trade Bill. We continued to support the bill although it was greatly weakened.

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

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

### **SB 5629** - Pregnancy Prevention Programs

The bill passed both Houses and was signed by the Governor on the 29th of April. In its final form, the bill amended the current law. The Department of Health is allowed to apply for comprehensive sex education funds. All mention of abstinence was dropped. There is no title.

Family Planning is funded for the first year at a 90% level. While there is no funding for the second year, it is expected that federal funds will be available.

**HB 1412** - Autism Insurance. This died because of the financial note.

Not too bad a result given the circumstances.

Contact – Wayne Martin, [docmartin934@aol.com](mailto:docmartin934@aol.com), 425 746 9960

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Safe Baby Bottle & Secure Medicine Return bills

The sad news here is that neither bill made it through the legislative process. The Safe Baby Bottle bill made it the furthest, passing the House 76-21, but did not survive in the Senate. The Secure Medicine Return bill did not pass out of either chamber.

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

## EPA HOLDS MAJOR PUBLIC HEARING IN SEATTLE ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE MAY 21ST

EPA is having only two public hearings in the country (Arlington VA and Seattle) on the EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson's proposed global warming findings made public on April 17, 2009. These proposed findings comply with the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2007, holding that greenhouse gases are air pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act. These two proposed findings are: “the current and projected concentrations of the mix of six key greenhouse gases...in the atmosphere threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations” (the endangerment finding); “the combined emissions [of these six gases] from new motor vehicles and motor vehicle engines contribute to the atmospheric concentrations of these key greenhouse gases and hence to the threat of climate change” (the cause or contribute finding). The six greenhouse gases covered in the finding are: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride.

The Seattle hearing will be at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center, 2211 Alaskan Way, Pier 66, **on May 21st, Thursday from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm.**

For more information, and/or to register for the hearing, go to:

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment/hearing-seattle-may21/html>

LWWWA will have a designated representative to testify for the League. But, all of us can attend, and testify orally or in writing, as individuals, to urge the EPA and federal government to take all necessary actions to reduce our emissions of global warming gases.

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

Marian Wineman, [mwineman@comcast.net](mailto:mwineman@comcast.net), 206 285 1066

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

## For Reference

## KEY SESSION DATES

The 61st Washington State Legislature opened its long session on Monday, January 12. The 2009 legislative session in Olympia runs from January 12 to April 26. 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.

## CONTACT LISTS

Portfolios / Lobby Team – <http://www.lwwa.org/about/officers.html>

Legislators – <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>

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

## **L**EAGUE POSITIONS

LWVWA positions – <http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/Program%20In%20Action%20website.pdf>

## **R**ESOURCES

League action website - [http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/advocacy\\_index.html](http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/advocacy_index.html)

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 – [tvw.org](http://tvw.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 (follow “Legislators” link above). 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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