

League of Women Voters of Washington

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

www.lwvwa.org/advocacy

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## 2009 Final Reports

### CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Like other portfolios, Children's Issues advocates spent most of the session aiming to protect as many childcare and early learning programs as possible. The only legislative bill to pass and be signed by the Governor for early learning was **ESHB 1943** to develop a Statewide Professional Development System for childcare providers.

Advocates were shocked when Governor Gregoire vetoed the early learning section of **ESHB 2261**, the revised definition of basic education legislation. She objected to having the definition of basic education available to only at-risk three-and four year olds. Advocates agree that all children birth to five should be included in the basic education definition, but saw adding at-risk young children as a first step. The governor stated that she is committed to providing quality early learning programs for all our children, and a Quality Education Council is mandated to report to the Legislature by January 2010.

The final budget maintained the Career-Wage Ladder and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network at current funding levels using federal stimulus dollars. The Department of Early Learning sustained 27.7 staff positions (13%) and cut the DEL budget by 9.7% compared to 2007-09 levels. The Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) was cut by 160. Home visiting programs for at-risk young children were cut by 25-30%. Other programs sustained cuts in funding.

During the next legislative session advocates will continue to work to pass **HB 1754** Continuity of Care to revise subsidized child care policies, and **SHB 1329** the child care center collective bargaining bill.

Questions? Contact Children's Issues Co-Chairs:

Margie Reeves - [mpreeves@comcast.net](mailto:mpreeves@comcast.net)

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### 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 included 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 safety net. 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 Governor vetoed Section 115 of **ESHB 2261**, regarding a program of early learning for at-risk three and four olds, because basic education cannot be made available for at-risk children only. She has asked the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Department of Early Learning Director to work on a proposal to include all children in an early learning program. The Governor also vetoed Section 709 partly because standards, guidelines and definitions of a highly capable program and the funding level haven't been determined yet.

## Budget Impact on Education

Two years ago the state budget was applauded for funding education with \$1.7B, and now we're looking at a \$1.8B cut (with federal stimulus one-time money reducing that to "only" an \$800M cut). New programs, pilot projects, and grants appropriated two years ago are now eliminated. I-728 funds (for class-size reduction) are cut by 65%.

What does this mean for our K-12 students? Larger class sizes will reduce individualized attention, no more after-school programs for those needing extra help or those with an empty house to go home to, less reading assistance in the lower grades where it makes the greatest difference, fewer nutritional meals made possible through the Local Farms and Healthy Kids Program, and fewer sports teams.

What does this mean for teachers? Younger, enthusiastic ones will be the first to be laid off (some estimate 3000-5000 teachers statewide will be laid off or not hired), no cost-of-living raise, less assistance to improve math and science methods of instruction, more students in their classrooms, less resources for diagnostic reading assessments in the early grades, less professional development and no paraprofessional training.

The irony is that even with resources being cut drastically at all levels, students, teachers and school districts will still be held accountable for ensuring everyone reaches higher standards.

Questions? Contact Education Chair: Catherine Ahl, 360-697-7924, [cathahl@hotmail.com](mailto:cathahl@hotmail.com)

## ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE

Since the end of the legislative session, which failed to pass the governor's request capping climate change gases, the governor has issued an executive order that requires the state to seek an agreement for Washington's only coal-fired electricity generating plant, the TransAlta facility in Centralia. The agreement will seek to require the plant to comply with the state emissions performance standard usually reserved for new power plants no later than 2025, resulting in at least 50% emissions reductions from the plant. TransAlta is the largest single source of global warming pollution in the state, accounting for 11 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions. Advocates encourage the state to work with the company and the people of Lewis County to accomplish the change sooner than 2025. The order also directs the Washington State Department of Transportation to work with regional transportation planning organizations in the state's seven most urban areas to expand public transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and commute trip reduction programs, implementing benchmarks the legislature established in 2008.

Bills that passed:

**E2SSB 5854** - This bill was one of the four environmental priorities. The bill allows for the following:

1. Energy codes- Residential and non-residential construction permitted under the 2031 Code must achieve a 70 percent reduction in energy use, using the 2006 Code as the baseline. The Council must adopt state energy codes between 2013 and 2031 that incrementally move the state towards achieving the 2031 Code standards.
2. Strategic Plan- The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) must develop and implement a strategic plan for enhancing energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from homes, buildings, districts, and neighborhoods. This plan must be used to direct future increases in the Code.
3. Commercial building benchmarking, beginning January 1, 2010, qualifying utilities must maintain records of energy consumption data for all non-residential and qualifying public agency buildings for which they provide service. Upon receiving authorization from a non-residential building owner or operator, the qualifying utility must upload all of the energy consumption data associated with that building to the Portfolio Manager. Non-public, non-residential building performance data must be uploaded by 2012. CTED will report back to the legislature on appropriate benchmarking of residential buildings.
4. Public buildings- Establishes performance standards, benchmarking, and other reporting requirements for public buildings. Any reporting public facility with a National Energy Performance Rating score below 50 must undertake a preliminary energy audit by July 1, 2011. If potential cost-effective energy savings are identified, an investment grade energy audit must be completed by July 1, 2013, with implementation of the cost-effective energy conservation measures by July 1, 2016.
5. Leased public buildings - A qualifying public agency may not enter into a new lease or a lease renewal on

or after January 1, 2010 for a facility with a National Energy Performance Rating score below 75, unless a preliminary energy audit has been conducted within the last two years, and the owner or leaser agrees to perform an investment grade audit and implement any cost-effective energy conservation measures within the first two years of the lease agreement, if such measures are identified in the preliminary audit. **ESSB 6170** repeals the hybrid tax exemption and replaces it with various environmental tax incentives. **ESH 2129** changes the definition of power plant to make sure the Emission Performance Standard is applied to facilities inside or outside the state, limits the amount of unspecified resources and blending of multiple resources in long-term contracts that are not with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and includes changes to allow deferred accounting and includes extraordinary cost protections for utility consumers. **SSB 5055** Creates a "net benefit" standard that the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission must apply when considering the sale, merger, or transfer of a regulated utility. **SSB 5136** Homeowners' associations' governing documents may not prohibit the installation of solar energy panels by an owner or resident on the owner's or resident's property. **SB 5107** Revised judicial standards for granting relief under LUPA for projects in an energy overlay zone (established by county ordinance concerning the zone.) Wind projects are required to have a county ordinance that follows Department of Fish & Wildlife wind power guidelines, or the county must have prepared an EIS concerning the zone. **E2SSB 5649** Washington State University is authorized to implement grants for pilot programs that provide community-wide residential and commercial energy efficiency upgrades. CTED must establish a process to award grants to financial institutions for the purpose of creating credit enhancements for energy efficiency services and projects. **SSB 5921** Revises the definition of weatherization to sustainable residential weatherization allowing funding for energy and resource conservation and energy efficiency improvements, repair, and health and safety investments. **E2SSB 5560** requires all state agencies to meet the statewide GHG emission limits and report use and sets fuel standard for the state fleet. When distributing capital funds, agencies must consider whether the entity receiving the funds has adopted policies to reduce GHG emissions. Requires integrated climate response plan. **SSB 5724** A county with a PUD that generates, transmits, and distributes electricity for sale within the county may construct and operate a facility to generate electricity from biomass. **SB 5989** Allows for deferred accounting in the emissions performance standards. **E2SHB 2227** Directs the coordination of green job creation in Washington. **HB 2165** Allows the Department of Natural Resources to develop and implement forest biomass energy demonstration projects. **HB 1184** Extends the time period during which a customer of a municipal utility must repay any loan given for the purposes of increasing energy efficiency from 120 months to 240 months. **ESHB 1004** Adds products to Washington's appliance efficiency standards. **ESHB 2289** Expands the Energy Freedom Program to include state efforts to promote, develop, and encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy, and innovative energy technology markets in Washington. **E2SHB 1007** Directs the Housing Finance Commission to develop and implement a Sustainable Energy Trust Program to provide financing for qualified improvement projects.

Bills that did not pass:

Amendments to I-937 (**ESSB 5840**)  which took a variety of forms throughout the session, was a result of a conference committee with Senate and House leaders. The conference bill reflected the agreement struck with leadership and many stakeholders, including the environmental community. The conference bill allowed utilities more flexibility in meeting the standards, and would result in a reduction in new renewable energy development by up to 12-15%. The agreement was coupled with the passage of the extension of the renewable sales tax exemption (**ESSB 6170**-see above). In the end the exemption passed but not the policy bill. The Recycling Act for Mercury-Containing Lights, **HB 1469**, would have created a producer responsibility approach to recycling CFLs and fluorescent lights, through a program modeled on the state's successful E-Waste Law. Though **2SHB 1469** did not manage to pass, there was substantial interest in addressing the issue in the 2010 session. The Operating Budget included a provision to have the Department of Ecology (DOE) develop recommendations for an effective, statewide recycling program for mercury lights by December 2009, with stakeholder input and consideration of several funding models including producer-funding. Climate Change Legislation, **E2SB 5735**,  started out as an environmental community priority championed by the Governor but did not pass in the final hours of session. The final legislation required the DOE to recommend, by December 1, 2010, a GHG emissions reduction program that sets statewide and phased-in specific sector emission caps. It included provisions on reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and

required the Centralia power plant to come under the existing emissions performance standard by 2025.

Questions? Contact Energy, Climate Change Chair: Toni Potter, 206-365-8949, [antoniaotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniaotter@comcast.net)

## **REPRODCUTIVE RIGHTS**

As reported, the Pregnancy Prevention Bill was severely amended. However, the amended version was adequate and was passed and signed by the Governor. Family Planning was funded at a 90% level for the first year but with no funding in the second year. This is to be addressed in the next Legislative session. Autism Insurance died as the result of a \$3.8 million fiscal note. This will also be considered in the next session. All things considered, it could have been worse.

Questions? Contact Reproductive Rights Chair, Wayne Martin, 425-746-9960, [docmartin934@aol.com](mailto:docmartin934@aol.com)

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Final passage of bills signed by 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 replacement project as a deep bore tunnel and four general-purpose lanes in a stack formation. State funding to be used solely for the tunnel and removal of the existing viaduct structure shall not exceed \$2.4B and must also include \$400M in toll revenue. The City of Seattle must bear all utility relocation costs associated with the state work on the viaduct replacement project. State funding may not be used for central seawall or water front improvements. Property owners in the corridor will be charged for any cost overruns in excess of \$2.8B.

**ESHB 2211** – tolling of the 520 Bridge Corridor

The bill authorizes early tolling, but limits the use of tolls to the center corridor. If tolls collected are not enough to back the \$1.95B bonds then gas taxes will be used to make up the difference. The bill left open the possibility of tolling the 1-90 corridor until such time as congestion deemed it necessary.

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

The Transportation Budget Bill was signed into law with minor changes to the final passage by the legislature. Major projects such as the Alaskan Viaduct, the 520 bridge corridor, and the Columbia River Crossing were all funded 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. The major issues throughout the session concerned the ferry service. The bill provides funding to maintain the existing level of service for all routes and build at least two new 64-car ferries besides the one that has already been designated. The budget plan calls for two new 144-car ferries, but no appropriation has been made. If funds become available, a 144-car ferry could arrive as early as 2013. Fares are capped at 2.5% per annum and the Transportation Commission must be able to justify any increases in fares after exploring other ways of reducing operational cost. The Legislature's 16- year financial plan is \$127M short of covering ferry operations and \$936M short of covering procurement of vessels.

Since the bill was signed, the Joint Transportation Committee is already working on its goal of finding a sustainable funding source for transportation projects since the decrease in gas tax revenue is expected to continue. Tolling has been and will continue to be a major item on the legislative agenda as will HOT lanes, reservations on ferries and even a possible wheel tax. So although the session is over the dialogue on how transportation will be funded is still very much in the forefront.

## For Reference

### **C**ONTACT LISTS

Portfolios / Lobby Team – <http://www.lwwwa.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.lwwwa.org/advocacy/Program%20In%20Action%20website.pdf>

### **R**ESOURCES

League action website - [http://www.lwwwa.org/advocacy/advocacy\\_index.html](http://www.lwwwa.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 \_\_\_\_\_

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.