



2010 SESSION PREVIEW

To the citizens of the 47th Legislative District



STATE REPRESENTATIVE GEOFF SIMPSON

Dear neighbors,

While times are tough right now, I believe our best days -- in Washington State and in America -- are still ahead of us.

The economy is showing signs of improving, but new jobs and revenue will continue to lag behind. That means you and I will continue to struggle as we dig our way out of one of the worst financial times our nation has ever had. But there is light at the end of the tunnel.

There's plenty of blame to go around in Washington D.C. and on Wall Street for our global economic crisis. Nearly every state in the nation is struggling and we're no exception, although we are in better shape than many others. Even so, this session in Olympia we must balance a budget that is at least \$2.6 billion short. Just like you and I do every month when we look at our family's budget, the Legislature will have to make hard choices and set priorities.

I voted against the state budget last session because it took a penny-wise, pound-foolish approach. The Legislature made \$4 billion in cuts that decreased public safety by ending supervision of thousands of criminals, increased the cost of sending our kids to college, made various cuts to public education, reduced our overall ability to provide quality care for the elderly and eliminated access to health care for thousands of people. More can always be done to find greater efficiency but we shouldn't continue to eliminate essential services and forgo the investments we need to get our state on the road to recovery.

Inside this newsletter, I'll provide you with an update on my priorities this year - - creating jobs, balancing the state budget, improving health care, investing in education and preparing for flooding in the Kent Valley.

I know these are issues that matter to every family in the 47th District. Many of you have questions about other topics you care about. If you have a question or comment, please contact me and I'll get back to you personally.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your representative. It is an honor and a privilege.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Simpson".

Rep. Geoff Simpson,
Covington
47th Legislative District

Keeping In Touch

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JOBS, HEALTH CARE, BUDGET, EDUCATION & FLOOD PROTECTION

JOBS TO BUILD OUR FUTURE



Forty percent of all construction workers here in Washington state are unemployed. The 2010 Jobs Act will put people to work fixing up our local schools and universities in every corner of the state. We can create a better learning environment for our students and increase long-term energy efficiency all while creating thousands of new jobs. By making this smart investment now, taxpayers will reap the benefits for many years to come.



One of the best things we can do to create jobs, improve our quality of life and increase our economic competitiveness is to invest in our transportation system. Thanks to the Legislature's decision to fund critical projects around the state, we just had the largest construction season in history. I've fought for road projects in south King County for many years and it's always gratifying to see them completed.

We also need to keep extending a hand to families of workers who've been laid off. Last session, we improved unemployment benefits so workers who lost their jobs wouldn't also lose their homes. This session, we should invest in more worker retraining opportunities to make sure people have the skills necessary to get back to work. Unfortunately, essential programs like this will have to compete with every other expenditure in the budget.

HEALTH CARE THAT MAKES SENSE

As a full-time professional firefighter, I hope I won't be responding to an emergency call at your home. If I do, I certainly won't check your wallet before giving you the necessary and possibly life-saving care you need. But make no mistake,



someone is paying for the uninsured -- taxpayers and those who are fortunate enough to have health insurance. If we fail to take action soon, the rising cost of healthcare will put health insurance out of everyone's reach.

Most people get their health coverage through their job. But more and more employers

-- especially small business owners -- are finding the costs of health coverage to be out of reach. They are being forced to find coverage with higher co-pays, higher deductibles or drop coverage altogether.

Although Washington state has led in expanding access to health care by creating Apple Health Care for Kids to ensure every child has care and the Basic Health program to provide access for the working poor, we must do more and do it wisely. More than 80,000 people in this state who work hard for a living everyday are on the waiting list to access Basic Health. By investing more in preventative care now, we'll save millions in emergency room and catastrophic costs later and we'll help our economy by keeping productive people at work instead of in a hospital or nursing home.

Last year, I sponsored a common-sense proposal that would have allowed Washington state to receive more federal matching funds to provide quality care for seniors in nursing homes. This would be a win-win for the state and our seniors but unfortunately, it was not passed. I will be working this session to find more ways to make health care more affordable and accessible to everyone while reducing the cost of care.

STATE REP. GEOFF SIMPSON

A STATE BUDGET THAT INVESTS - NOT HARMS

The global economic meltdown and our broken tax structure continue to cause Washington's revenues to lag behind the cost of essential public services like schools, health care and prisons. This year's shortfall is at least \$2.6 billion. But this year's shortfall is a much bigger problem than the \$9 billion shortfall in 2009.

Since we cut \$3.3 billion dollars last year, the part of the budget that isn't protected constitutionally or in some other way is much smaller. Where last year about 50 percent of the budget couldn't be cut, now the protected part is 70 percent.

We already increased efficiency, froze salaries, enacted layoffs and furloughs and cut programs deeply. So while last year we saved \$600 million by not funding I-728 for smaller classroom sizes for example, and another \$557 million by reducing enrollments at universities, this year we don't have those big ticket items available to cut.



Further cuts will only harm public safety, our economic future, our education system or our ability as a society to care for the vulnerable populations that are our joint responsibility.

If we eliminate all treatment and care for those with a mental illness or a developmental disability, we would only save around \$1.6 billion. If we eliminated every state prison and all supervision of released offenders, we would save around \$1.6 billion. We could eliminate all care for low-income elderly individuals, and we would save even less than that: around \$1.3 billion. We could completely eliminate financial aid for college and save around \$500 million.

Sadly, we're not likely to get any more federal stimulus this year. So our options are pretty limited. Either close some of our hundreds of tax loopholes or find another source of revenue. I'll be looking for ways to protect our future economic vitality while causing the least shared pain possible.

EDUCATION

Our state constitution says our number one priority is education. Unfortunately, the legislature and Governor have failed to make that happen. Our state has a dismal record of investing in public education. Our teachers are poorly paid, our classes have too many students and we haven't yet figured out how to adequately prepare all our students for the 21st century economy.



But I do believe our schools are changing for the better. Our teachers do a great job. And last year we took a big step toward making our constitutional obligations a reality by passing a comprehensive education reform bill.

This session, I'll continue working with education advocates, including my seatmate Rep. Pat Sullivan, on education reform. I believe every child deserves a world class education, no matter where they live or how much money their parents make. That's what America is all about.

PROTECTING OUR HOMES & BUSINESSES FROM FLOODING

If heavy and prolonged rain occurs, many homes and businesses in the Green River valley that don't typically see flood water could be underwater. Last session I was successful in obtaining millions of state dollars in levee repair funding. This session I'll be supporting a variety of measures that go even further to prepare the valley for the flood that we all hope will never happen.

This session I am proposing a bill that will allow property owners who are at risk to join together into a Local Improvement District that encompasses the entire valley floor to pool their money and buy improvements to levees to further protect their property. Improvements that would be unimaginably expensive for one property owner might be achievable if everyone joins together and contributes a small share.



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HELPING HANDS

A lot of families are hurting right now due to the global recession. Here's a partial list of places where you can go for help.

Meals on Wheels (Senior Services Nutrition Program)

206-448-5768

www.seniorservices.org/nutrition.asp

Offers a selective menu of breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Selection process takes one week or less for eligible seniors over 60 years of age.

Catholic Community Services (CCS)

Phone: 206-323-6336

Web: www.catholiccharitiesseattlearch.org

Family preservation and reconciliation, therapeutic foster care, crisis respite, case management, in home care, chore services, child care, tutoring and other services.

Childcare Resources

253-852-3080

www.childcare.org

Offers a database of child-care providers along with licensed and home-based daycare.

Hearing, Speech & Deafness Center

Phone/TTY 425-226-6111

www.hsdcenter.org

Professional services & technology to people of all ages who experience hearing loss, speech and language impairments, or who are deaf.

Manufactured/Mobile Home Dispute Resolution

206-464-6684

www.atg.wa.gov/consumer

The office provides an equitable and low-cost option for manufactured home owners and landlords to resolve disputes concerning alleged violations of these rights.

The ARC of King County

206-364.8384

info@arcofkingcounty.org

www.arcofkingcounty.org

Advocates for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Multi-Service Center

253-838-6810

www.skcmcs.com

Emergency and support services agency for low-income residents of south King County. Emergency shelter, transitional and low income rental housing, food and clothing banks, assists with energy bills and sponsors employment programs.

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