



# The Weekly Page

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## Pages Learn About Legislature

### Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: governing is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day. As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

### Death with Dignity Act too lenient

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Ben Summers and Jacob Moushey introduced Senate Bill 5000, which addresses the issue of terminally ill patients and their rights to have doctors assist them in ending their lives. “The bill is a good one because it will make it harder for the terminally ill to be pressured into assisted suicide by insurance companies and relatives who might inherit money or property when the person passes on,” said Sen. Moushey. In a Health Department report, 28 percent of terminally ill patients who requested Death with Dignity forms in 2010 were concerned about being a burden at the end of their lives, and 4 percent were concerned about the financial implications of their treatment. “Combining these concerns with pressures from heirs and insurance companies could result in people requesting doctor-assisted suicide even when they



really didn't want it,” said Sen. Summers. This bill prevents insurance companies from paying for lethal dosages of medicines prescribed by doctors. In addition, three witnesses will be required to sign a written request to end life. None will be allowed as beneficiaries in the patient's will; one must be a licensed physician; none can be an employee of a healthcare facility.

### Obesity vs. Healthy Lifestyle... and the winner is?

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Ruben Aguilar, Olivia Miles, and Wanda McNealy introduced Senate Bill



6543, which addresses the issue of obesity. “The bill is a good one because it will decrease in the number of overweight children in Washington,” said Sen. Miles. This bill will require one hour of physical education for K-12 students every day. “Along with increasing the minutes of physical activity, we are obligating the schools to teach more about healthy eating habits,” said Sen. Aguilar. Washington State is the fattest state in the western United States, and is projected to have a 15 percent increase in the obesity level by 2018. “We can provide children with healthy lunches at school, but they are still faced with unhealthy choices at home. That's where education comes in. We will educate the children of Washington about healthy diets and get them in shape,” said Sen. McNealy.

### Pages write bills, hold mock hearings

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. Criteria for making a legislative solution work was discussed before students selected issues to research and develop. Then they used bill templates on class computers to formulate official-looking documents in preparation for a mock committee hearing on Thursday. Some topics for policy bills included small business start up costs, same-sex marriage, and juveniles charged as adults. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

## Senior traffic accidents predicted to decrease

Olympia – Senate Bill 7350 was introduced yesterday by Senators Greyson Zatzick and Laura Simmonds. “This bill addresses the issue of elderly drivers and will greatly decrease risks of accidents on our roadways,” said Sen. Zatzick. This bill will require citizens over the age of 65 to renew their driver’s license with a driving test, accompanied by a medical examination. Added costs from the new law will be paid for with a half penny gas tax increase per gallon of gas. Sen. Simmonds, a survivor of the tragic Weller case in 2004, has been pushing hard for elderly driving regulations. A recent study found that senior citizens have the highest number of traffic accidents per mile, more than any other group including teens. By 2030 it is estimated that seniors will make up 25 percent of the total driving population and they will be involved in nearly 25 percent of fatal vehicular accidents. “It’s a dangerous system we have now; we want a safer community,” said Sen. Simmonds.



## Kids need more veggies and exercise



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Dee Cheng and Makenna Lohrey introduced Senate Bill 5578, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity. “The bill is a good one because it increases the amount of exercise in public schools, and provides the tools for children to make healthier food choices,” said

Sen. Lohrey. Eighty percent of high school students are not getting the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The rate of obesity in the U.S. has tripled since 1980. This bill mandates public schools to create a “healthy eating” curriculum to be taught to all students in all grades through health classes. “In Finland, children who were taught to focus on healthier food choices had lower cholesterol levels,” said Sen. Cheng. “We also want to include longer and more frequent physical education classes in this bill,” she said.

## Misuse of welfare benefits costs state millions

Olympia – Senate Bill 5242 was introduced yesterday by Senator Austin Carpenter. “This bill addresses the issue of welfare fraud,” said Sen. Carpenter. Currently, people who get financial aid from the state have their monthly benefits loaded onto an

electronic benefit transfer card. These can be used at ATMs to get money to pay bills, buy food, and purchase other items.

“Unfortunately, some people sell their cards and then report them stolen so they will be issued new cards,” said Sen. Carpenter. An average of over 27,000 cards are replaced every month, no questions asked. This bill will prevent use of EBT cards at ATMs at entertainment venues such as casinos. It will also limit the number of replacement cards to three per year. The senator estimates the state will save \$48 million a year with these new regulations.



## Lawmakers give local small businesses a boost

Olympia – Senate Bill 7777 was introduced yesterday by Senator Andrew Blanchard-Reed.

“This bill addresses the issue of small business failures and will help them succeed beyond their first four years of operation,” said Sen. Blanchard-Reed. According to the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics study, only 44 percent of small businesses are still operating four years later. This bill seeks to provide an exemption from the Business and Occupation Tax (B&O) for small businesses during their first three years of operation. By allowing this business exemption, they can save up capital, which a recent AllBusiness.com posting says is one of the top 10 things that can lead to failure. Businesses can use this capital to hire new employees, improve product selection, and stimulate the local economy. “We expect the state to actually make money off of the exemption, as increased business stability and profit will actually increase B&O revenue after the initial three-year exemption. Three years is really a pretty short time when you’re considering allowing businesses the opportunity to last who knows how long,” said Blanchard-Reed.



## No more adult sentences for juveniles

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Reagan Teegarden and Ein Huie introduced House Bill 1212, which addresses the issue of juveniles sentenced as adults. “The bill is a good one because it will better match juvenile crimes and punishments,” said Sen. Teegarden. Studies from Columbia University show that teens who are given harsher adult punishments are not “scared straight,” but reoffend sooner and more often than those who receive more appropriate punishments. This bill will prevent any minor under the age of 18 from being charged as an adult.



## LWOP to replace the Death Penalty

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Leif Espedal and Mike May introduced House Bill 3999, which addresses the issue of the death penalty costs. “The bill is a good one because it will save the state up to \$1.3 million for each prisoner on death row,” said Rep. May. Prisoners on death row get special housing and require more security. The state pays hundreds of thousands of dollars per prisoner for court costs involved in appeals and Supreme Court reviews over many years. Currently seven prisoners await execution at the Walla Walla state prison. Jonathan Lee Gentry has been there for over 21 years. “This costs the state General Fund a lot of money,” said Rep. Espedal. This bill will eliminate the death penalty and replace it with life in prison without the possibility of parole. In the long run, the state will save money, according to the lawmakers.



## Rep advocates for gay/lesbian marriage rights



Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representative Victoria Lovaas. “This bill addresses the issue of personal rights for gay and lesbian couples and will allow them to have the same legal right to marry as any other heterosexual partners,” said Rep. Lovaas. Currently the state allows

same-sex domestic partnerships, but these provide far less protections than marriage, according to the representative. “When Former Congressman Gerry Studs passed away, his partner of 15 years was denied the government pension that would have gone to a legally recognized spouse,” she said. “Many conservative citizens feel that allowing gays and lesbians to marry will destroy the institution of marriage, but in the state of Washington the dissolution of legal partnerships is less than 4 percent, far less than the nearly 50 percent divorce rate for opposite-sex couples in the United States.” President Barack Obama and Governor Christine Gregoire have both expressed their positive feelings on this type of bill.

## Rep wants abortion restriction adopted

Olympia—Representative Kelsey Sage introduced House Bill 2182, concerning abortion restrictions, in the Health Care and Wellness committee yesterday. “The bill is a step toward making it more difficult to get this procedure done in our state and

saving the lives of our unborn children,” said Rep. Sage. In 2009, 23,738 abortions occurred in the state. Teenagers 15-17 years old had a pregnancy rate of 24 percent, with over 10 percent opting for abortions, according to the lawmaker. This bill would require pregnant women seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound where they would see the image of the fetus and hear the heartbeat, or they could watch a video showing how the procedure is done. “Under a 2011 law, when women in Ohio heard the heartbeat of their unborn child, the percentage of women choosing to keep the baby dramatically increased,” said Rep. Sage. Although this bill would not change the choice women have, it would allow them to make a more informed decision, according to the lawmaker.



## EBT fraud costing state millions



Olympia – House Bill 2222 was introduced yesterday by Representative Zachary Coleman. “This bill addresses the issue of electronic benefit transfer card (EBT) fraud and will save the state millions of dollars,” said Rep. Coleman. Welfare recipients are illegally selling their cards on Craigslist and then reporting their cards stolen, and some are even handing over their cards to drug dealers to pay for their habit, according to the representative’s research. This bill will require drug tests for those applying for welfare benefits; those who fail will not be given cards.

## Lawmakers want to repeal Death with Dignity Act

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Rebecca Gaebel and Liz Boney introduced Senate Bill 5426, which addresses the issue of the new Death with Dignity Act. “The bill is a good one because it repeals the law created through a 2009 initiative,” said Sen. Gaebel. The senators feel that the law has the potential to force terminally ill patients into accepting assisted suicide. “A greedy child may want to speed up their inheritance by encouraging their parent to commit assisted suicide,” said Sen. Boney.



## Larger fines and more jail time proposed for animal abusers

Olympia—House Bill 1111 was introduced yesterday by Representative Vance Boyer. “This bill addresses the issue of animal abuse and will increase the punishments for people who treat animals badly,” said Rep. Boyer. In 2010 there were 324 recorded cases of animal abuse in Washington State. Most occurred between Everett and Olympia. “This problem is right on our doorstep, but we just sweep it under the rug. Animals need us to help them survive,” said Rep. Boyer. Research shows that when animals live through abuse, they will likely not be adopted at humane societies. This bill raises the punishment to six years in jail with a \$15,000 fine, plus vet bills. “With this bill, the worse the abuse, the higher the fine would be,” said Rep. Boyer.



## Juvenile offenders are kids, not adults



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Cody Jacks and Elisabeth Swidecki introduced Senate Bill 6666, which addresses the

issue of juveniles being charged as adults. “The bill is a good one because it will eliminate immature teens from harsh punishments and give them the help they need to become productive citizens,” said Sen. Jacks. Two-thirds of all young people in the juvenile justice system need help with drug or alcohol dependence and three out of five have mental health issues. “Sending them to adult prisons just makes them into more hardened criminals,” said Sen. Swidecki. Nationally, children in adult jails and prisons are five times more likely to be raped, twice as likely to be beaten by staff and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon than youths sent to juvenile justice system. “Producing competent citizens to be released back into society is the whole goal of prison,” said Sen. Jacks. This bill prevents teens under the age of 18 from being tried as adults for any crimes.

## Re-do of failing curriculum proposed

Olympia – House Bill 2296 was introduced yesterday by Representative Madison Minsk. “This bill addresses the issue of math and science education and will enable future generations to compete for global jobs,” said Rep. Minsk. Recent reports indicate that American students in 12th grade rank 19th in the

world in math. President Obama has addressed the problem that American students are unable to compete on a global level, pointing out that other countries

are devoting more resources to the important math/science educational goals. This creates a huge disadvantage for America's future generation who will soon be competing in a world-wide economy. The math and science education students are receiving now is failing them on a global level. This bill will reconstruct K-12 education, focusing on math and science education. “Fewer topics will be covered more in-depth and have real life application,” explained Rep. Minsk. Money to pay for the restructuring will come from a proposed 1/2 cent per \$1,000 increase in property tax. “Although increased taxation is never popular, Washington's students will be put back on top on a global level; our future's well being is priceless,” she said.



## Innocent children need saving

Olympia – House Bill 1414 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Camren Richards and Cameron Johnson. “This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoke and will create a secondary law that bans smoking in cars that contain children under the age of 14,” said Rep. Richards. “Many children of smokers are trapped in cars and forced to breathe over 250 toxic chemicals during their travels,” said Rep. Johnson. According to studies, second-hand smoke can reach a level 30 times greater than the level at which air alerts are issued in U.S. cities. All of these toxins can lead to lung disease, heart disorders, asthma, and ear infections. “It is only appropriate that a person who would force a child to undergo such torment should pay the \$250 fine we are suggesting in our bill,” said Rep. Richards.



## Competitive edge results in Jeopardy win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of Jeopardy. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.



## Lawmakers aim to reduce hunger

Olympia – House Bill 1991 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Kyla Richards, Emily Rose, and Maddie Allison. “This bill addresses the issue of hunger in the state of Washington and will make food more easily available to families in need,” said Rep. Richards. Washington ranks 32nd in hunger in the U.S. and there is an estimated 251,000 Washington households who live with the threat of hunger. Last year, 1.2 million people in the U.S. went to food banks for help, 40 percent of them children. If this bill becomes law, restaurants will receive a 5 percent tax exemption each year they donate food that was not used in their meal preparations to shelters and food banks. This idea is similar to the recently enacted law in Florida.

## Win-Win for unemployed youth and business

Olympia—Senate bill 7015 was introduced yesterday by Senators Nick Magill and Taylor Merrival. “This bill addresses the issue of youth unemployment and will encourage businesses to hire more teens,” said Sen. Merrival. The most recent statistics find that 34.5 percent of working-age youth are unemployed, compared to the 8.7 percent figure for all workers in the state. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate in the nation; over 10 percent higher than the national average. The senators blame the new minimum wage for part of the problem. “Companies want an experienced worker if they are going to pay over \$9 an hour for an employee,” said Sen. Magill. This bill reduces the minimum hourly wage to the national average of \$7.25. “This new lower wage will encourage business to hire more teens because the more experienced workers won’t want jobs that pay so little. The more professional workers will be competing for the higher paying jobs. It’s a win-win for everyone,” said Sen. Magill.



## Earlier start times recommended for high schools

Olympia—Senator Layla Lothian introduced Senate Bill 6667 yesterday in the Early Learning & K-12 Education committee. “This bill is a good one because it enhances student learning and decreases teen problems related to sleep deprivation,” said Sen. Lothian. Research shows that adolescents need at least 8.5 hours of sleep each night, but 85 percent of teens get less than that. In high school, sleep deprivation impairs a student’s ability to pay attention, be creative, communicate, think abstractly, problem solve, make decisions, and stay motivated. Teens who don’t get enough sleep have a greater tendency toward delinquency, violence, and truancy. “The early start times of most public high schools are contributing to the problem,” she said. This bill will require high schools to start no earlier than 8 a.m. “When Minnesota changed their starting times from 7:15 to 8:40 a.m., there were marked improvements in attendance, daytime alertness, and grades. Seattle schools that made these changes also recorded these same improvements,” said Sen. Lothian.



## Bill advocates for juvenile justice

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Katrina Kalamar and Sharon Ke introduced House Bill 2764, which addresses the issue of juveniles tried as adults. “The bill is a good one because it will lessen the possibility of juvenile criminals turning into more violent adult criminals,”

said Rep. Ke. Researchers show that young offenders transferred to the adult system have higher recidivism rates compared to juveniles handled by the juvenile justice system. “Adult prison is no place for children,” said Rep. Kalamar. Teens sent to adult prisons and jails are five times more likely to be raped, twice as likely to be beaten by staff, and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon than youths sent to youth reformatories. This bill will set the minimum age a juvenile can be tried as an adult at 17. “The punishment that juveniles receive in adult prisons does not fit their crimes because they aren’t culpable at their young ages,” said Rep. Kalamar.





### Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2012 Page School employs certificated civics teachers Judi Orr and Leo O’Leary. Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Leo has been teaching and coaching in and around Olympia for the past six years. “I really like the fact that I can help kids make their dreams come true through both education and



athletics,” he said as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.

legislative process. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.

### Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional and include delivering campus correspondence, helping with mailings in legislative offices, and handing out documents on the floor of the Senate and House.



### Guest speakers visit Page School

Representatives Ann Rivers (R-18th), Ross Hunter (D-48th), and Marko Liias (D-21st) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. Each spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information in regards to the



### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>  
This newsletter has been posted there.