

24th Legislative District Legislative Report 2010

Dear Neighbors:

A most challenging 2010 Legislative Session has ended, and as we leave Olympia and head back home to our district, we want to update you on this year's important legislation and what it means for all of us on the Olympia Peninsula.

Above all else, the 2010 session was about the budget. The worldwide economic recession that we were forced into last year developed into the biggest economic downturn since the Great Depression by the time our 2010 Legislature convened. Washington was one of 48 states facing a budget shortfall. Thirty-three other states raised taxes in the face of unprecedented shortfalls, but last year we held the line and balanced the budget through a combination of sharp cuts and federal recovery dollars.

The recession, however, has not been short-lived. It continues to have a big effect on consumer spending, slashing our expected sales tax revenue while demand for state services has *increased*. With declining revenues and increased costs, our growing \$2.8 billion shortfall was too large to solve with cuts alone this year.

Although the three of us may have had our different viewpoints about which cuts to make, we are united in our belief that Washington's rural communities should not and will not bear the heaviest burden in these tough times. We are confident that we can, in fact, play a leading role in the economic recovery.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you in Olympia. We respect the many diverse opinions among all of you, and we appreciate the opportunity to work together with you to make the 24th District, and our state, a better place to live.

Sincerely,



Senator Jim Hargrove



Rep. Lynn Kessler



Rep. Kevin Van De Wege



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Senator Jim Hargrove

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2010 Senate Committees:

- Human Services & Corrections, Chair
- Judiciary
- Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation

2010 Legislative Highlights

Government Reform

I believe that new revenue cannot be justified unless we also get every cent of value out of our existing taxes. That is why I spent a majority of my effort on the budget this year working on the following reforms that save real money and reduced the need for even more taxes.

General Assistance-Unemployable



When accidents happen or illness strikes, hard working people can fall on hard times. The GAU program is meant to provide temporary help until people get the medical care they need, recover and get back to work, or until it's clear that federal disability benefits are warranted. This year we added time

limits to GAU, a long-overdue reform needed to keep this benefit temporary. We also decided to offer care, not cash -- substance abuse treatment and housing vouchers. Research tells us that this is the most effective way to help folks facing the toughest problems get their lives back on track. Savings are expected to top \$25 million.

Prevention Paying Off

It's time for some good news! Fifteen years ago, there were more than 1,500 juvenile offenders in state facilities every day. Thanks to crime prevention programs we have implemented, that number is down to 650 and falling. These programs have saved the state hundreds of millions of dollars over that period of time as juvenile crime has been reduced. Over the next three years, we will close down Maple Lane School in Centralia, saving an additional \$5.8 million a year.

Closing Costly Corrections Facilities



Through prevention efforts, rehabilitation of juvenile offenders, and sentencing reform, we have slowed the growth of crime to the point that we can now close McNeil Island Corrections Center without compromising the safety of our citizens. Due to its age and island location, MICC is one of the most expensive prisons to operate. Savings to Washington will top \$59 million a year.

Highlighting Public Safety



The tragic shootings of six law enforcement officers last fall highlighted aspects of our criminal justice system that still needed work. I want you to know, however, that public safety is my priority every year - not just something that I work on in the wake of tragedy. Numerous bills and a constitutional amendment were passed by the legislature to address public safety this year, and below are a couple I sponsored.

Enforcement of parole violation rules

Rather than rely on other states to do the right thing when parolees from out of state commit their next crime in Washington, we tightened the rules to keep these offenders in jail until they stand trial. (SB 6548)

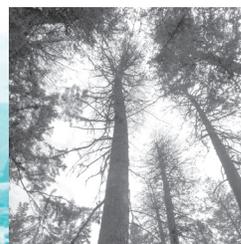
Not guilty by reason of insanity

Decisions on whether to release people found not guilty by reason of insanity had been based on their success in treatment without consideration of public safety until we passed SSB 6610. Now a Psychiatric Review Board, who makes these recommendations, will be required include public safety as factor. The bill also allows The Department of Social and Human Services to move certain patients to more secure environments, including prison if needed, to maintain the safety of patients, staff, and the public.

Protecting the finances of seniors and vulnerable adults

Working together with the State Attorney General, we passed a bill that will give financial institutions the tools they need to help protect seniors or vulnerable adults from being taken advantage of. (SB 6202)

Green Jobs



Timber and Forest jobs have always been "green jobs" and now will be officially recognized as such with a law passed this session. As future state and federal programs incentivize and target expansion of "green jobs," clarifying this designation will help expand our local economy.



Representative Lynn Kessler

House Majority Leader

Website: www.hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/kessler

2010 House Committees:

- Ways and Means
- Rules
- Executive Rules

2010 Legislative Highlights

Protecting Criminal Justice Employees (House Bill 1317)



In the aftermath of recent tragedies involving violence against law enforcement officers, the Legislature took several steps to try to prevent similar tragedies from ever happening again. One measure that I sponsored adds an extra layer of protection for criminal justice employees from those using public records requests

to obtain their personal information. Although I have long been a strong advocate for the public's right to access information, the photos and birthdates of law enforcement personnel should be protected from disclosure. That information, in the hands of someone with violent and irresponsible intentions, can be used to track down an officer's home address and where his or her children attend school.

Our law enforcement officers know the job they sign up for comes with some risks. But it is thanks to their willingness to take those risks that the rest of us enjoy greater security. By giving them a little extra protection, we express our gratitude. The Legislature passed my bill nearly unanimously, and it was signed by the Governor in March. Members of the media still have access to the information, which continues to protect the public interest.

Tax Incentive Extended (House Bill 3014)



Manufacturing companies in certain counties, such as Clallam and Grays Harbor, can continue to take part in a tax incentive program that has been a proven job creator. The rural counties sales and use tax deferral program grants these companies a deferral of state sales and use taxes on qualified construction

and equipment costs. These are some of the biggest costs for our companies, particularly new ones. This program gives them the chance to focus on growing their business and hiring workers. In fact, the 317 employers that have used this program have created over 33,000 jobs across Washington.

But the program was scheduled to expire this year. I sponsored a bill to extend it another ten years, so that we can continue to support manufacturing and job creation in our rural counties. In order to qualify, the county has to have an unemployment rate at least 20 percent above the state average for at least three years. We hope that Washington's economic recovery will fuel a natural phase-out of this program, but for the time being this gives a boost to counties such as ours that need it most.

Strengthening Our Timber Industry (House Bill 2541)



Supporting forest landowners is a key piece to ensuring a strong and vibrant timber industry. I co-sponsored a bill this year directing our state's Department of Natural Resources to write conservation proposals that strike a balanced approach between protecting timber jobs and the environment. Working forests provide

jobs that put dollars directly into our communities and schools, and we need to make sure that owning forest land is economically viable for landowners. The Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers, as well as the Washington Forest Protection Association, both testified in favor of this bill, which the Governor signed into law.

Defending Property Owners (House Bills 2423 and 2425)



Should the government have the right to take your land and sell it to a private developer? I don't think so. Together with other legislators, I co-sponsored a pair of bills that would protect property owners from land grabs. The issue has gotten more attention since the U.S. Supreme Court ruling known as the

Kelo decision. In that ruling, the court upheld the government's authority to condemn private property in the name of economic development. Like many people, I was outraged at the idea that a person's home can be seized so that a private company can build a shopping mall or a hotel. Although the bills didn't quite make it all the way through the Legislature this year, the fight for property owners' rights continues.



Representative Kevin Van De Wege

Deputy Majority Whip

Website: www.hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/vandewege

2010 House Committees:

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- General Government Appropriations
- Rules
- Technology, Energy & Communications

2010 Legislative Highlights

Job Creation



My primary focus this session was on creating and protecting jobs, particularly in rural areas like ours that have been hardest hit by the recession. There is good news to report on this front: despite the worldwide economic downturn, our district is creating good, family-wage jobs. From Aberdeen to Port Angeles, employers are starting to hire, a sign that recovery may be on the way. Here is some of the good job news:

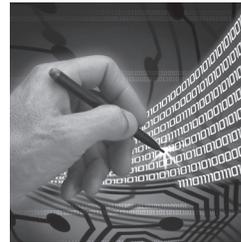
- In Port Angeles, Peninsula Plywood opened its doors on a long-idle mill site and has already hired 125 employees.
- In Aberdeen, work will soon begin on building pontoons for the 520 bridge replacement. I have been working with our state Department of Transportation to ensure that most of the workers hired will be local workers.
- Biomass and energy sector jobs continue to grow on the Olympic Peninsula. This session I sponsored a bill that allows the state Department of Natural Resources to enter into long-term biomass agreements. This greatly helps our pulp mills and others who are interested in producing energy by giving them a secure supply.

Honoring Veterans



Two years ago, I co-sponsored a bill to name portions of Highways 112 and 113 the “Korean War Veterans Blue Star Memorial Highway,” in honor of those who served in the Korean War. This year, I am proud to have sponsored a measure to honor our veterans of the first Gulf War. A portion of State Route 110, in the far western part of Clallam County, will be named the “Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial Highway.”

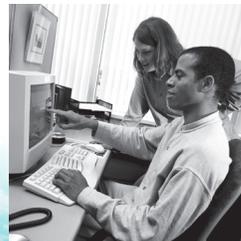
Streamlined Government



Citizens expect efficient government, and not just during tough economic times. This year, all of state government was closely examined to see where cuts and efficiencies could be made. I sponsored two bills to cut the size of government and save taxpayer dollars. One bill (House Bill 2935) reduces the number of state environmental and land use hearing boards from five to two. It consolidates the powers, duties, and functions of the Environmental Hearings Office and the Growth Management Hearings Board, without diminishing the important role that these boards have. The other bill (House Bill 3132) would have ended Washington’s participation in the bi-state Columbia Gorge Compact with Oregon. I felt that the role of the Compact belongs more to the federal government, and that our limited state dollars should be spent on things like public schools or caring for the elderly. The bill passed the House but didn’t make it through the Senate before the session ended. As a member of the House General Government Appropriations Committee, I also supported the following changes to make government more streamlined and efficient:

- Combining the highly successful Washington Main Street Program into the state Dept. of Archaeology and Historical Preservation.
- Restructuring three growth management hearing boards into one.
- Transferring emergency food assistance programs to the state Dept. of Agriculture.

Supporting Small Businesses

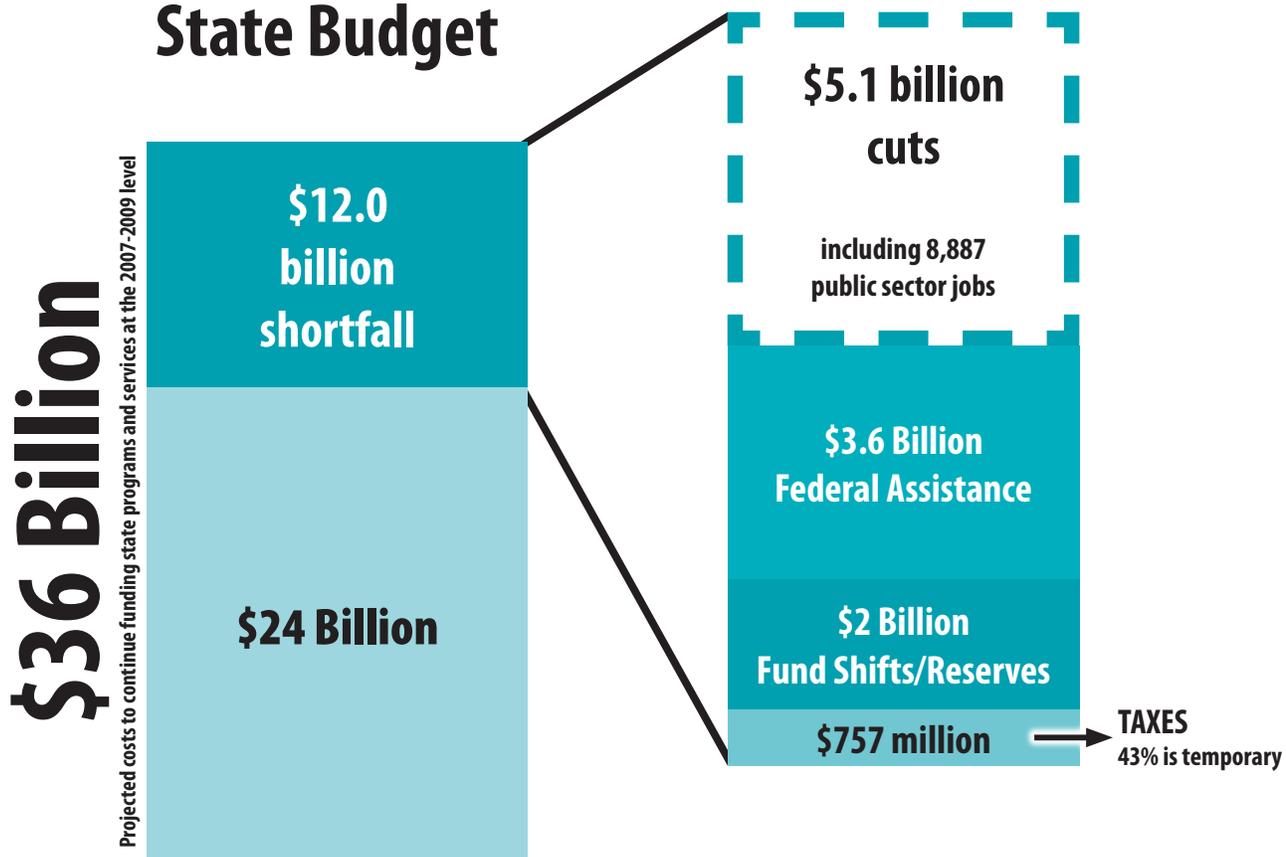


Small businesses create jobs and keep local dollars in the community. The Legislature doubled the small business tax credit this year, and businesses making up to \$80,000 a year will actually pay less. I will continue to look out for Main Street when it comes to state budget negotiations.

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Balancing the State Budget

The 2009-2011 State Budget



What cuts does the new revenue prevent?

The revenue package “buys back” cuts that were originally planned to help close the state budget shortfall. Here are things we now do not have to cut:

- 16,000 children will keep their health care coverage through the state’s Apple Health program.
- 60,000 low-income working adults will be able to stay on the state’s Basic Health Plan rather than being uninsured.
- 12,000 students won’t lose their state-funded college financial aid, allowing them to stay in school.
- 42,000 seniors and disabled adults will be able to remain in their homes rather than being forced into institutions.
- Class sizes for children in Kindergarten through 4th grade will not increase.
- 50,000 women with high-risk pregnancies won’t lose crucial prenatal medical care.
- 2,600 dying patients across Washington won’t lose their hospice care.
- Thousands of seniors will continue to receive nourishment through the Meals on Wheels program.

Rep. Kessler Retiring



A Fond Farewell from Rep. Kessler

This is the last time I will be part of a 24th District legislative newsletter. After 18 years of serving as your state representative, I will be retiring at the end of my term this year.

It has been an immense honor and privilege to represent you, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so. From the moment I first arrived in Olympia, I have worked to ensure that Washington's rural communities – both west and east of the Cascades – have a voice in our legislature. As I step down from this job, I feel confident that we are moving forward as One Washington.

Over the next few months, I will be spending time in the communities across our district, connecting with people like you and thanking you personally. Please don't hesitate to contact me in the meantime. Although I am leaving the legislature, I still look forward to being an active member of our community. Our work will continue.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Kessler".

Rep. Lynn Kessler

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Sen. Jim Hargrove
Rep Lynn Kessler
Rep. Kevin Van De Wege

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