

SENATOR RANDY GORDON

Dear friends and neighbors,

I am honored to serve you as your Senator for the 41st Legislative District, an area including Mercer Island, Beaux Arts, Newcastle, much of Bellevue and parts of Issaquah, Renton and unincorporated King County.

I have been given an opportunity few have had to come to Olympia with fresh eyes and ideals, ready to serve you and our communities. During the next 60 days of this highly compressed legislative session, our state will face some of the most daunting economic challenges confronted in our 121-year history.

Many of you are facing your own personal financial challenges and are concerned that the state will not act responsibly in addressing this crisis. I agree with Gov. Gregoire's statement that: "We cannot just cut or just tax our way out of this immediate budget shortfall." We must fulfill all of our duties, including both the constitutional mandate to balance our budget and the constitutional mandate to fully fund basic education. I will support increased efficiencies in government, closing inequitable tax exemptions and loopholes before considering approval of any revenue increases. I will also reject measures that give the illusion of cost-savings when they really just shift the burden to us as citizens (like elimination of all day Kindergarten in the public schools). I have been appointed to the bi-partisan Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), working to make state government operations more effective, efficient, and accountable. Making our government work for us efficiently and effectively is my top priority.

This newsletter spells out the challenges we face and also lets you know the filter through which I will be assessing what is best to do on such issues as education, job creation, civil justice and the budget shortfall.

I will keep you informed with video updates and e-newsletters, which you can subscribe to by going to my website www.sdc.wa.gov/senators/gordon and clicking on E-News Sign Up. My legislative website will also advise you of the legislative measures I am sponsoring.

Sincerely yours,



Randy Gordon



Please Keep In Touch

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Senate Committee Membership

- Early Learning & K-12 Committee
- Judiciary Committee
- Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)

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Investing in Our Future: Education

In Gov. Gregoire’s State of the State address, she said, “Education is the single best investment for our future and the key to the success of

our kids.” I agree. The 41st Legislative District has some of the highest ranked school districts in the state, districts where parents and communities have spoken with a single voice in favor of funding their schools. Yet existing statutes link what a community can give to its own district to the level of state funding. When state funding declines, as has recently occurred, the levy limit drops – and in some cases has dropped to

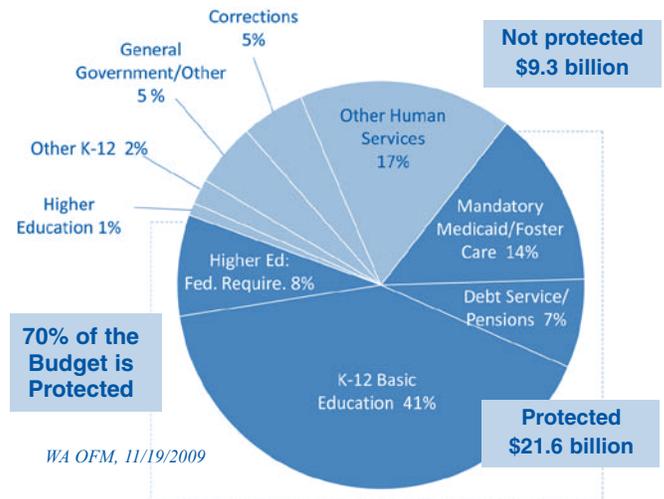
levels below those already approved by the affected community. I am co-sponsoring a bill, SB 6502, that adjusts the levy base to include the amounts properly funded by the state and allows us to fund our local districts up to the level already approved by “We, the People.” I also favor increasing the levy limit in separate bills that are being circulated. It is a false economy to pretend we are “saving money” by cutting back on the most important investment we make. As a member on the newly created Early Learning Caucus, headed by Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown, we are creating a comprehensive, cohesive vision that will help all our children achieve their full potential and earn us Race to the Top federal dollars.

Budget Challenges

Given that the fiscal year has started and the most important reductions cannot be implemented until March, a portion of the \$31 billion appropriation in the enacted budget cannot be reduced. Major legal restrictions have made a good portion of the operating budget off limits. Just as cutting expenses for a family usually cannot responsibly include not paying mortgage or car payments, the state has legal obligations: a constitutional requirement to fund basic education programs; federal government requirements to cover certain eligibility groups and services for Medicaid; and the requirement to fund debt service and pension obligations.

Washington is one of 48 states that must construct budgets amid unprecedented revenue shortfalls. I appreciate and agree that taxes must never be the first option before having first exhausted other choices. That is why I am supporting closing tax exemptions that stand in the way of everyone paying their fair share along with us. I also will support increased efficiencies in government as a member of Joint Legislative Audit and Review

Majority of \$31 Billion Budget is Protected: Tied to state constitutional or federal requirements



Committee (JLARC), working to make state government operations more effective, efficient, and accountable.

To give you an example of how sharp a pencil we are using, you should keep in mind that Washington has already drastically reduced expenses to the point where it is rated as one of the three best-managed states in the nation by the prestigious Pew Center. I have looked into proposed cuts to the School for the Blind and the Center for Childhood Deafness & Hearing Loss in my service on the K-12 Committee. I am pleased to report that, under the latest proposed budget, we can save \$110,000 from these programs based upon administrative reductions without impairing its core missions. These sums are minute compared to the shortfall that remains. I list these examples to show you how thorough our current program review is – saving where we can, without sacrificing programs that would keep all of us up at night wondering what kind of people we had become.

Other States in Same Predicament

48 States Face Budget Shortfalls



48 states have addressed or still face shortfalls for FY2010.
49 states had total tax revenue fall during 2nd quarter; 36 report double-digit declines.
25+ states face new shortfalls after balancing budgets just months ago.

Upholding Our Values

The Washington state budget is a moral document that sets forth the values we believe in. Although it concerns state expenditures, it affects lives in very real ways. One of my jobs as your Senator is to make sure that the expenses we cut are consistent with our values. In the governor's "Book 1" all-cuts budget, cuts included elimination of K-12 all-day Kindergarten, the Gifted Program and Reading Corps. It included reducing one of the most effective early learning programs, the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program for three year olds – even though we all know that the earlier education begins, the greater the harvest we reap later. It also called for reductions to the Middle School Career and Technical Education program. Such cuts offer false savings. If all-day kindergarten is eliminated, we are simply asking families (perhaps our own) to provide child care or to keep a parent from the workplace for another year. Depriving children of an opportunity for early learning sells short an entire generation. Eliminating technical training and education keeps young people from finding jobs in industries that need them and from reaching their full human potential. The initial budget called for draconian cuts, including the elimination of hospice care that lets more than 2,500 dying patients experience the dignity of remaining in their homes during their last days. It also cuts maternity care for 50,000 moms. Such cuts are not consistent with our values.

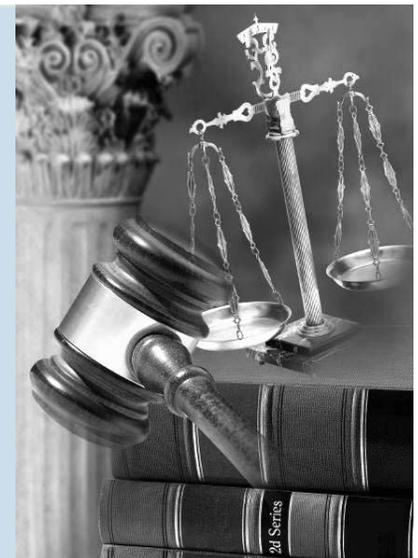


For this reason, I support the restoration of these items to the budget and support the 2010 supplemental budget. I do not do this lightly, because we must find revenues sufficient to sustain these essential programs. There are, however, some things that speak to our essential values and that are not mere "dollars and cents" issues. We must take care of the young people who are our future, our working men and women who are our present, and our seniors to whom we owe our existence. I am fighting to keep these life enhancing and life changing programs off the chopping block.

Civil Justice Reform

With my background practicing law in Bellevue for over a quarter century, and as an adjunct professor of law at Seattle University School of Law for over a decade, I have been able to hit the ground running in the Judiciary Committee, which considers matters pertaining to our civil justice system. One of the unfair aspects of existing law results in the congestion of our appellate courts, increasing the expense of their administration with frivolous appeals. At present, defendants found legally liable by a jury of our fellow citizens have been using appeals as an investment strategy – literally balancing their books on the backs of our innocent, injured fellow citizens. Knowing that injured people have already waited years to be compensated, they use this delay to extract compromises on verdicts entered by duly constituted Washington juries. Consider this: a major insurance company can be found legally liable for tortious conduct, a verdict can be entered against it, and it can under current law file a frivolous appeal simply because it pays only 2.1 percent interest on that verdict pending appeal – investing the amount owed in higher yielding investments. It has, in effect, added

insult to injury by making the injured and innocent victim become its banker at low interest rates. We should not incentivize frivolous appeals being filed as an investment strategy. Under legislation that I drafted, SB 6764, and for which I am the prime sponsor, state law will be amended to prevent this injustice. No out-of-state, multinational insurance company or corporation should be rewarded for delay. Justice delayed for many is justice denied. This not only saves the state money by reducing these frivolous appeals, but corrects an injustice in the law.



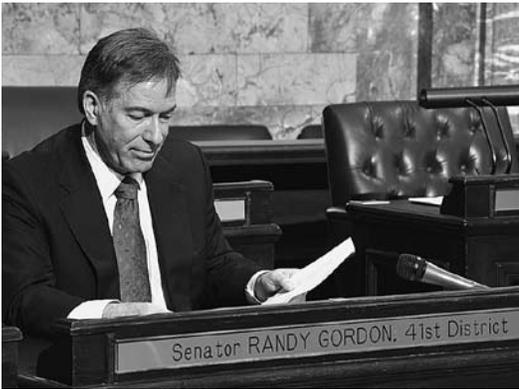
Creating New Jobs

Unemployment figures of 10 percent nationally, according to our best analysis, may underestimate by up to 5-7 percent the actual job loss because of the number of people who have simply given up looking for work. I am urging my colleagues in the House and Senate to consider a comprehensive program to assist Washington citizens as we face the challenges of widespread unemployment. Among other things, I have urged that we activate "shovel ready projects," such as eliminating obstructions at the west end of the 520 Bridge project that are keeping us from getting started on our side of Lake Washington. This involves federal dollars ready to improve infrastructure in our community and creates jobs now. I support retraining and education for workers currently displaced by the downturn so that they will be ready to avail themselves of the green economy to come. Tax laws (such as the B & O tax) are identified as disadvantaging small, startup businesses, the very engine of new jobs we need to support. Addressing regressive features of our tax structure is a long term goal we need to maintain a business environment that

keeps Washington at the top nationally. A recent report by *U.S. News and World Report* lists Washington state as number one of the top seven states in terms of being "business friendly."



It is American innovations (cars, airplanes, movies, software, etc.) that have been the major engine of economic growth and employment for generations. Despite the current recession, we can and must make decisions that encourage innovation. I am working with other members of my caucus to implement a comprehensive economic plan for the short term, midterm and long term: protecting and creating jobs today; promoting vocational training and education in the midterm; and assuring a climate supportive of innovation and job creation for generations to come. This is good government.



Sponsored Legislation

My website will show you the legislation that I am currently sponsoring and co-sponsoring at www.sdc.wa.gov/senators/Gordon (Click on "bills"). I am supporting legislation on a wide range of issues important to our district. The language of this proposed legislation is available online for your review and comment.

Stay in touch

I want to hear your views on the issues important to you and your family. You may reach me by e-mail at Gordon.randy@leg.wa.gov or call my office in Olympia at 360-786-7641. To see my video updates go to the main page of my website. My best wishes to you and yours.

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SENATOR RANDY GORDON

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41st District Town Hall Meetings
Saturday, February 20th
Hazelwood Elementary School
7100 116th Ave SE / Newcastle, 98056
9:30 - 11 am
Eastgate Elementary School
4255 153rd Ave. SE / Bellevue, 98006
1:30 - 3 pm
You are invited to the 41st Legislative Districts town hall meetings on Saturday, February 20th at Hazelwood and Eastgate Elementary Schools. I will be joined by Representative Judy Clibborn and Representative Marcie Maxwell to share with you the latest news about the state budget, economic conditions, education, transportation, health and safety and more.