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2010 Legislative Update

# Curtis King

District 14 • Republican

Spring 2010

Dear Friends,

The 2010 legislative session, and the following 30-day special session, ended just after midnight on the morning of April 13th. The impasse between the House and Senate majority was all about taxes... which of your taxes to raise, and which new taxes to add. **The cost to taxpayers for the special session was more than a quarter of a million dollars.** The budget could have – *and should have* – been completed during the regular session. This was supposed to be the session to reform state government, not just increase taxes.



**The Senate Republican Caucus has offered more than 55 possible solutions to our state's fiscal crisis over the last five years.** You can find them on our website, [www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov](http://www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov). Each one has been ignored. Instead of reforming government, the legislative majority chose to simply increase your taxes. Inside this newsletter, I'll provide more information regarding the budget.

I want each of you to know how honored I am to represent you in the Washington State Senate. Not a day goes by that I do not think about the responsibilities you have given me. **I want to assure you that I will continue to do my best representing you in a manner that makes all citizens of the 14th District proud.** Thank you for all of your phone calls, e-mails, letters, and visits. I appreciate meeting and hearing from each of you. Please continue to stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Senator Curtis King

Contact information on the back page

2010 Legislative Update

## The SR-410 Nile Valley landslide

I was very pleased to have sponsored **Senate Resolution 8690**, honoring those whose hard work and dedication assisted in the swift recovery following the October 11, 2009, Nile Valley landslide.

The slide devastated our community, forcing many people out of their homes and completely destroying others. SR 8690 honored Governor Gregoire, Washington State Department of Transportation employees, Yakima County Public Service employees, the citizens of the Nile Valley, and numerous other state and local agencies.

The people and businesses of the Nile Valley were united in their help and support of each other and these agencies. **They showed all of us how to handle a disaster, setting a high standard to achieve in time of adversity.** In addition, all the men and women from these groups and agencies put aside jurisdictional questions, focused on the job and got it done. THIS IS HOW GOVERNMENT SHOULD WORK! THANK YOU TO ALL INVOLVED.



Senator Curtis King, R-Yakima, is briefed by DOT South Central Region Administrator Don Whitehouse, along with Reps. Norm Johnson, R-Yakima, and Judy Clibborn, D-Mercer Island, at the site of the Oct. 11 landslide.

### The time to reform government?

The governor and majority leaders in the Legislature made promises early in session that this was the time to reform our state government. Yet instead of reform, they siphoned off more than \$500 million from every state fund and account, including the capital budget – *again*. They relied on hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government and emptied the rainy day fund. The majority did make more than \$700 million in cuts, but then added more than \$400 million in new spending and almost \$800 million in new taxes... THE SINGLE LARGEST OPERATING BUDGET TAX INCREASE IN STATE HISTORY! How is this reform?

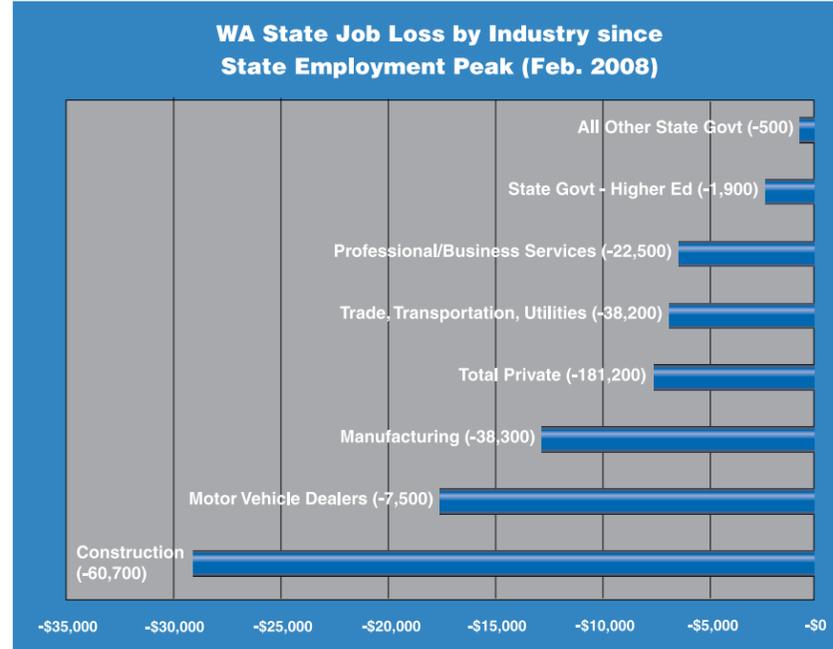


### The only government “reform” – suspending I-960

The people of our state have voted THREE TIMES to require the Legislature to have a two-thirds majority vote to increase taxes. The majority party suspended this initiative for three years so they could raise taxes, knowing the citizens of Washington were against it. Ironically, due to clerical errors, majority lawmakers voted THREE TIMES to suspend the initiative. We fought hard to save this taxpayer protection law, but to no avail.

### Layoffs and pay raises

Since February 2008, more than 181,000 workers in the private sector have lost their jobs (7.6 %). The state has cut 2,400 jobs—1,900 in higher education and 500 in all other areas of state government. Other than higher education, the state has cut just .7% of its workforce. **That is greater than a 10 to 1 difference between private worker cuts and state worker cuts.**



In fact, thousands of state employees were given pay increases of 5% per year for two years in their contracts negotiated by the governor in 2009. State employee contributions for healthcare were frozen at 12%, with the state making up the other 88%. Private sector employees pay about 22% on average. **Where is the reform? Where is the balance?**

Prior to this recession, it took an estimated 22 private sector employees to generate enough taxes to pay for one state employee. Today that number is 27. It is obvious that this is not sustainable. **Our state employees are a valuable asset**, but their numbers need to be balanced with what taxpayers can afford.

### Millions in new taxes

The new tax increases are nearly \$800 million this year and almost \$2.5 billion over the next three years. This budget increased taxes on:

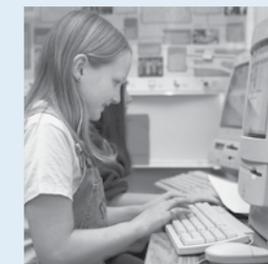


- **Bottled water** – Will now be subject to sales tax. A \$5 case of bottled water will now cost about \$5.40.
- **Candy and gum** – Will also be subject to sales tax. A \$1 candy bar will now cost about \$1.08.
- **Soda pop** – The tax on soda will be increased by 2-cents per 12 oz. can/bottle.
- **Beer** – Like the soda, tax on beer will increase from \$8.08 per barrel to \$23.58 per barrel.
- **Cigarettes and other tobacco products** – The per-pack tax will increase by \$1 to \$3.02 per pack.

These new tax increases will result in the loss of more jobs and prolong this recession. It is the opposite of what the Legislature should be doing.

### Quality Education and Race to the Top

In addition to serving as the ranking minority member on the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, I also sit on the Quality Education Council. The QEC met several times in 2009 and developed recommendations to improve our educational system. **Most of these changes are needed, but they come with an estimated price tag of over \$4 BILLION per year.** We have no idea where this money will come from. Before we commit the state to this kind of spending we must know how we are going to pay for it.



To be eligible for federal Race to the Top money, the Senate passed Senate Bill 6696. It made some needed changes to our educational system and because of that, I voted in favor of it. However, it did not go far enough and we ended the session by calling it, “Race to the Middle.”