



The Benton Bulletin

CLARK COUNTY
17th Legislative
District

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Dear Neighbor:

The 2009 session will go down in history as an extraordinary example of bad decisions in the toughest economy we have seen since the Great Depression. By the last half of session, the state's unemployment rate had grown to 9.2 percent – leaving 344,069 workers without a job. Yet the majority Democrats unbelievably introduced two income tax bills and a \$1.1 billion sales tax increase. Fortunately, these bills died as public opinion polls showed they would be defeated at the polls.

Because of the huge \$9 billion deficit facing the state going into the next biennium, we ended up with hurtful cuts that could have been avoided. I supported several alternatives that were put forward, but unfortunately the majority Democrats refused to take any road that would not create the need for higher taxes.

We even lost the fight to pass **Senate Joint Resolution 8209**, which would have required the Legislature, through a constitutional amendment, to save extraordinary revenue in good times so we would have it when we cycled back to tough times.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns or need information about legislation considered during the recent session.

My fight continues to protect our children from sexual predators and murderers

Once again, the Legislature failed to adopt my legislation to enact "Jessica's Law" and to make murder of a child a capital offense.

Senate Bill 6115 would have done two things: First, it would require a mandatory 25 years in prison for sexually assaulting a child. Second, it would make murder of a child by a sexually violent predator automatically subject to the death penalty.

"Jessica's Law" as you may recall, is named in memory of Jessica Lunsford, a nine-year-old Florida girl who was abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered in February 2005. Her killer, a convicted child molester, had been paroled several years short of his 10-year sentence. Since 2006, I have been working to enact what Florida did – a mandatory 25-year sentence for sexually assaulting a child.

In February 2009, Alycia Nipp, a 13-year-old Clark County girl, was raped and murdered – her accused killer is a Level III sex offender who was being electronically monitored by the state. He should never have been released from prison short of his ten-year sentence and he should automatically face the death penalty for killing Alycia.

Both of these cases are horrendous. Our laws must do more to protect our children.

And to add insult to injury, majority Democrats pushed through **Senate Bill 5288** to reduce community supervision time for violent offenders including those convicted of molesting and assaulting children. Unbelievable! If Alycia's accused killer had not been wearing an electronic monitoring device, he might never have been caught and he would still be at large. This was clearly the wrong place to look for budget savings!

Light rail sales tax authority coming to Clark County

The Legislature has approved **Senate Bill 5540** to allow C-Tran to create an unlimited number of gerrymandered high-capacity transportation corridors in Clark County financed by a new sales tax – to be voted on by a few and paid by everyone who shops in that



"Tea Party"

Taxed Enough Already!

April 15, 2009 - 5,000 Washington taxpayers gathered on the steps of the State Capitol to protest government spending and taxes.

"Donate Life Month"

Senate Resolution 8662

 April was "Donate Life Month" to draw attention to the critical need for organ donations. I offered **SR 8226** to encourage people to get the red heart on their driver's license – indicating their desire to be an organ donor. One donor can save the lives of up to eight people and enhance the lives of more than 50. I have the red heart on my license. Please join me!

Bill gives away your voice in presidential elections

Senate Bill 5599 puts Washington in line to give away our Electoral College votes according to the national popular vote – not how we vote here in Washington. This is absurd! The United States Constitution gives states the absolute right to determine the manner of awarding their electoral votes. Washington has always cast its electoral votes for the presidential candidate who received the most popular votes in our state. This measure was sent to the governor to be signed into law on April 21. It goes into effect when the majority of states enact the same law.



Committee assignments

- Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance, Ranking Republican Member
- Government Operations & Elections
- Transportation

gerrymandered district. Clark County voters – 65 percent – have already said no to the enormous cost of light rail. Drawing a ridiculous line around a small area to improve the “yes” vote potential is just plain wrong. In addition, the bill sets no limit on the number of such districts that can be created in a county. Under this bill, multiple gerrymandered districts could be created in Clark or any other county – each with its own .9 percent sales tax increase! This short-sighted concept will drive even more shoppers across the border into Oregon and reduce much needed revenue for city and county services.

Legislature approves my bill to help students with dyslexia

My Senate Bill 6016 will create a program for elementary schools to develop intervention and teacher training programs and materials in the state’s nine regional Educational Services Districts instead of Olympia. This will make the materials and training more accessible to Clark County teachers and teachers across the state. One in five children is affected by dyslexia and 80 percent of students labeled as learning disabled are dyslexic. These students are actually very bright, but they struggle in school because of a condition that can be identified and overcome when teachers are properly trained. The needed funding to implement my bill is included in the 2009-11 operating budget.

Senate wins, Legislature approves bill to protect “all” students from teachers who prey

Youths with developmental disabilities may attend public schools until age 21. Many seniors turn 18, and some even 19, before they graduate. A Senate Republican bill passed the Senate on March 3 ensuring the state’s sexual-misconduct laws for school employees – an issue I worked on for several sessions – covers all students to age 21. This was in response to an outrageous court ruling calling the law “vague” and dismissed charges against a teacher who had sex with an 18-year-old female student. The House failed to act on Substitute Senate Bill 5232, which I co-sponsored, and instead sent Engrossed House Bill 1385 to the Senate. This bill only protected students up to age 18. The Senate changed the age to 21 and sent it back to the House. On April 21, the House agreed to the change.

Do legislators do more than vote?

The media and other organizations that follow the Legislature too often ignore the many responsibilities of a legislator beyond casting his or her vote. This is very misleading.

Citizens elect people to represent them in the Legislature because of their stand on critical issues, their ability to work in a bipartisan manner to solve problems, and because they demonstrate sound judgment.

About one-eighth of the roll call votes taken in the Senate are simply to confirm appointments to boards and commissions. They always pass unanimously and may only be important to one of the 49 legislative districts. These confirmations accounted for 109 roll call votes this past session.

In addition, there is never just one vote per bill – votes on bills are taken in committees, votes are taken on original versions of a bill, on amendments to a bill, on substitute versions of a bill and very often one or more votes must also be taken on changes made to a bill by the other chamber. There are so many votes taken on a bill during the process it is nearly impossible to vote on every change on every bill if you are actually working on getting other important things accomplished.

It takes 25 votes in the Senate for an amendment or bill to pass. The Democrat majority in the Senate has 31 members, so a missed vote by a Republican senator is essentially a “no” vote.

During a session, there are countless meetings with constituents or on behalf of constituents and numerous conversations and negotiations with colleagues in both chambers to move good bills and stop bad ones. Sometimes my judgment determines it is more important to work on a pressing issue or meet with a constituent rather than simply voting yes or no on a bill that is clearly going to pass anyway. It is a judgment call in terms of time management that I make every day in the Legislature.

Legislators have hundreds of bills to watch – from reading the “fine print” to drafting amendments, and legislators spend an increasing amount of time responding to contacts by constituents because technology has made it so much easier for people to be more involved. I continue to work an average of 12 hours a day when the Legislature is in session and will always use my best judgment on your behalf as to where my time can make the most difference for you.