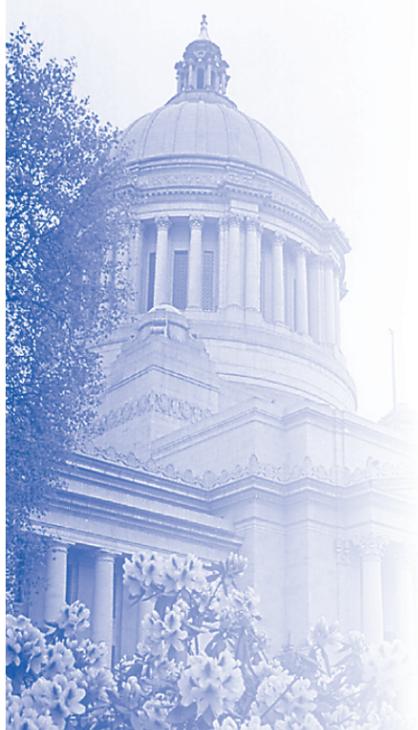


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Senator
Christine Rolfes

Spring 2012

Hello neighbors,

You'll find information about the Legislature's work this year inside this newsletter, but let me quickly fill you in on the highlights:

- For the first time in four years, we avoided making cuts to K-12 or higher education – a win for students and families across the state.
- We passed a \$1 billion package of capital investments that will not only advance important construction projects in Kitsap County, but will create 18,000 jobs in the building and trades sectors.
- I worked to address issues of importance to our community, including helping people find health insurance, encouraging small businesses and ensuring our ferry system is properly funded.

Although balancing the state budget this year was challenging, we continued to prioritize education. As you can see in this chart, K-12 and higher education funding make up more than half of state spending.

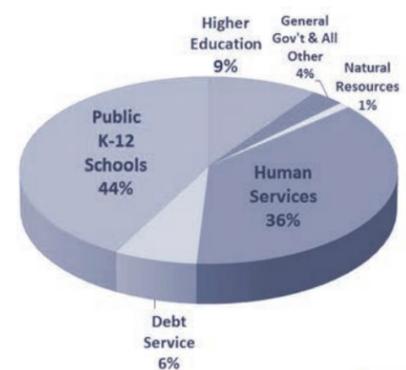
If you have questions, ideas or concerns, please call, send an email or stop by my office. It's an honor to serve our community in the State Senate, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Christine Rolfes

2012 Legislative Report

2011-13 Operating Budget: \$31.2 Billion



Percentages are approximate values.
Near General Fund - State & Opp Pathway

Preserving Land for Future Use

Thanks to legislation passed this year (House Bill 2502), Kitsap County will be better positioned to preserve key recreational and commercial forestland between Kingston and the Hood Canal Bridge by granting our county the same tax preferences available in Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties. Additionally, under the state's capital construction budget, clean-up of toxics along the Port Gamble shoreline will be accelerated, and the land made safe and available for public access.



©Don Willott

Connecting People with Health Care

Washington recently hit an unfortunate milestone: 1 million people in our state have no health insurance. Before we began our session, I heard from a local insurance broker that thousands of previously covered people in our community were about to fall into that category when KPS Health Plans ends its individual and family coverage lines this summer.

Those people will get help through a bill (Senate Bill 6412) that I proposed, which received unanimous support in both the Senate and House, and which the governor has already signed. Under the new law, people losing coverage because their plan is being cancelled by July 1 will be able to apply for similar coverage without being discriminated against for pre-existing conditions, keeping their new policy more affordable. For more information, contact the Office of the Insurance Commissioner by calling the consumer hotline at 1-800-562-6900.

For those without insurance or access to a physician, the Legislature maintained funding for our community health system – primary care is offered at the Peninsula Community Health Clinics (pchsweb.org) in Poulsbo and Bremerton.





Creating Jobs

Encouraging entrepreneurs

Inspired by a successful entrepreneurship program in Kitsap County (washingtoncash.org), I introduced legislation that will provide more Washingtonians with the support and training they need to start their own businesses.

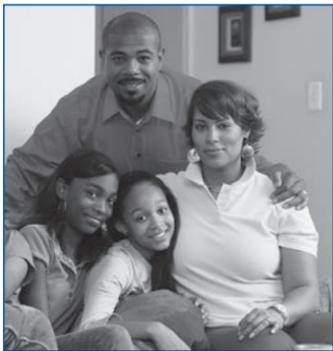
Whether people have been laid off in the middle of their career, have just exited military service, or have an idea for a new product, self-employment training helps them match their ideas with a sound business plan, allowing them to work for themselves.

The Legislature encouraged the establishment of self-employment assistance programs in 2007 for people who had lost their jobs and were collecting unemployment. But that authorization was set to expire this July. The bill we passed not only continues the programs but expands them across the state – giving a boost to a new generation of small business owners.

Investing in jobs and growth

- This session we passed a \$1-billion construction budget that invests in our state's long-term economic growth.
- It will create about 18,000 construction jobs in the short term, and 8,000 on-going jobs.
- It focuses on ready-to-go projects that will help our economy grow, such as improvements to skills centers and workforce training facilities, including Olympic College in Bremerton.

Supporting military families



Washington State leads the country in support of our military families and veterans. But there is always more we can accomplish. In 2011 we enacted new rules to make it easier for military retirees to use their experience when applying for state professional licenses. More recently, we passed bills expanding upon help for military spouses entering our state's workforce.

- The state will speed up professional licensing for military spouses or registered domestic partners who have been transferred to Washington.
- Military spouses will be able to keep their occupational licenses by placing them on inactive status when their families are deployed or transferred out of the state – and then be able to reactivate their licenses when they return.

Legislation to help returning veterans enroll in the college courses they need stalled this year, but I'm confident it will be reintroduced in the next legislative session.

Protecting Schools and Students

As the vice chair of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, I fought for a balanced budget that made no cuts to our K-12 or higher education systems. This session, we also took an important step forward in improving our teacher and principal evaluation system.

The Legislature has been ordered by our own State Supreme Court, however, to step up our funding of an adequate basic education. I've been appointed as one of eight members of a newly formed Joint Select Committee established to serve as a bridge between the court justices and the Legislature, where I will continue to advocate for our state's commitment to an excellent public education.



Transportation: Improving Roads, Supporting Ferries

The transportation budget that passed this year funded several projects vital to our community:

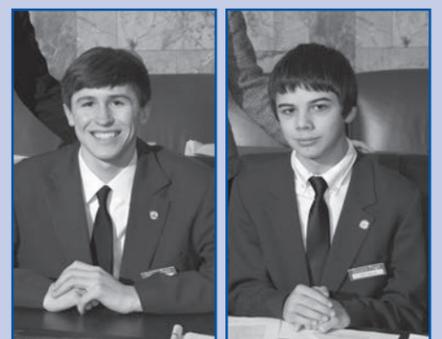
- Preliminary engineering of an improvement project at the intersection of **State Highway 305 and Suquamish Way** at the casino. Addressing this critical congestion point has been a longstanding priority for the area, and work is moving forward thanks to a productive partnership between the state, Kitsap County, the Suquamish Tribe, the cities of Poulsbo and Bainbridge Island, KRCC, and Kitsap Transit.
- Environmental work and preliminary engineering needed to improve traffic flow where **Highway 304 from Bremerton** merges with Highway 3. For those of you who travel through this area, you know it can be a major chokepoint, and I was excited to include it on the state's priority list.
- Funding to both maintain **ferry service** and to build a mid-size ferry (144-car) to stabilize operations system-wide and reduce service interruptions.
- Additional funding for a grant program known as "**safe routes to schools**" and new state standards giving local governments greater flexibility (and less cost) when designing amenities like bike lanes, safe trails and sidewalks.



Senator Rolfes Sponsors Local Pages

Local students John Kaltreider and Kyle Samson took time away from their studies during the legislative session to participate in the Senate Page Program in Olympia.

Pages learn about the democratic process first-hand – learning parliamentary procedures, helping senators, delivering messages and engaging in other tasks. Students also try their hands at drafting bills and engage in a mock legislative session.



If you are between 14- and 16-years old and would like to become a page, visit the program's web page by following the links on the Senate's home page: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate>

