



Senator

Derek Kilmer

26th Legislative District

2009 Legislative Update



**Senator
Derek Kilmer**
26th Legislative District

Olympia Office

226 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40426
Olympia, WA 98504-0426
Phone: (360) 786-7650
Fax: (360) 786-1999

District Office

3206 50th St. Ct. NW,
Suite 105-E
Gig Harbor, WA 98335
Phone: (253) 858-6716

Web site

www.sdc.wa.gov/kilmer.htm

Senate Committees

- Higher Education and Workforce Development
- Economic Development, Trade & Innovation
- Transportation

Let's stay in touch

One of the best ways to stay in touch as well as receive timely information about my legislative priorities is by e-memo.

If you would like to receive it, please send me an e-mail at kilmer.derek@leg.wa.gov.

Dear Neighbors,

The Legislature recently adjourned its 2009 session and I'm pleased to report back about how our district's top priorities fared. Inside I'll tell you about all the significant actions we took to create jobs, preserve our parks, secure a fair transportation deal and support our veterans.

But I want to start by providing some details on our state's budget challenges. Every business and family in our state is trying to weather the economic storm our country currently faces. State government is not immune to the economic downturn. As you may have heard, our state faced a recession-fueled \$9 billion shortfall that equaled about a quarter of our operating budget. This required lawmakers to make some very difficult decisions.

In the end, we plugged the budget with help from one-time federal stimulus dollars and money from our rainy day fund. But the single largest component of our balanced budget solution — by far — came in the form of deep cuts to virtually every area of state government. In the end, we cut more money out of state government than ever in the history of our state.

Though there's an array of valuable services our state can no longer afford, let me tell you what this budget does accomplish. This budget preserves a safety net, albeit a smaller one, for our state's most vulnerable citizens. It was written to preserve programs the state is most likely to be able to afford in the future. It limits cuts to education to levels well below what other areas of government suffered.

Moreover, we bucked past recessionary practices by **balancing this budget without raising taxes**. To me, it's critical to acknowledge that state government is not unique in the challenges it faces. With each of our families and businesses struggling to make ends meet, now is a time to focus on **growing jobs – not growing taxes**.

More tough decisions lie ahead but for now I'm eager to answer your questions and hear your concerns. I encourage you to send me an e-mail or call my district office. Let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

Derek Kilmer
State Senator, 26th Legislative District

Working for jobs

Helping small businesses

Job creation has long been a top priority of mine and with today's recession-weary economy it rose to the forefront in Olympia this year.

Not only did the Legislature approve new laws designed to spur the growth of our green energy industries, we also rewrote our unemployment insurance laws to conform with federal laws in a move that will save small businesses almost \$400 million over the next five years.

In addition, the Legislature approved my bill to cut red tape for small businesses, waiving penalties for first-time paperwork violations. And I also introduced legislation to provide a tax credit for small businesses that create new jobs, a measure that was approved by the Senate but stalled in the House. I'll be pushing it again next year.

Fighting for working families

Our rewrite of the unemployment insurance laws included provisions to boost funding for worker retraining to help people who have lost their jobs retool. The Legislature also expanded the state's Shared Work Program allowing partial unemployment benefits to be paid to workers who have had their hours reduced, a tool that encourages businesses to maintain employment.

But most notably, we increased unemployment benefits by \$45 a week for dislocated workers, a benefit that puts real money in families' pockets to help them pay their bills.

Revitalizing Communities

In a move that could bear fruit for years to come, the Legislature approved a bill I introduced allowing local governments to establish "revitalization areas" and use additional revenues obtained from new development there to pay for sidewalks, utilities, road improvements and the like. In effect, the new law allows growth to pay for growth without new taxes. As an immediate result, the state will contribute \$1 million per year for economic revitalization projects in Pierce County and \$330,000 per year for projects in Kitsap County for the next 25 years.

Saving our state parks

In any budget crisis, state parks are going to be vulnerable to funding cuts. That was certainly the case earlier this decade when the state cancelled leases on 13 parks operated by the state on land it didn't own.

So it wasn't terribly surprising when the governor in December proposed another series of park closures as part of her plan to bring state tax collections and spending into balance. And on her closure list were two parks dear to the 26th District — Kopachuck and Joemma Beach state parks.

Now, this year's session was remarkable in many ways, not just with the budget but with an array of other critical issues coming to a head. But no issue drove constituents to call and e-mail my office more than the issue of closing parks.

It's no wonder why. Parks build community and even help shape our regional identities. They are places where memories are made and where children connect to nature (my wife and I have certainly enjoyed taking our daughter to the parks in our area). And in a difficult economy they represent opportunities for affordable family entertainment and a lure for tourists.

That's why I'm delighted to report that the final state budget keeps all of our state parks open, an outcome that once again illustrates the power of public involvement. This will be done through adoption of the so-called "Montana plan." As you may know, the "Montana plan" is a proposal that will have the state collect \$5 from each vehicle registration unless the registrant opts out. This will be an optional donation (with a visible check box on the registration form allowing people to opt out) that will generate enough money to keep the parks open.



Getting A Fair Transportation Deal

Keeping Narrows Bridge Tolls Down

From my seat on the Senate Transportation Committee, I had the opportunity to shepherd several proposals through to hold the line on Narrows Bridge tolls. For starters, the Legislature approved my bill to ensure money from toll viola-



tions ends up in the Narrows Bridge tolling account. Also becoming law was my bill to ensure that toll dollars are not used for costs that do not contribute directly to the financing, operation, maintenance and management of the bridge.

Further, I helped secure cuts of \$1.5 million in bridge construction costs to keep from adding costs to tollpayers.

Advancing Kitsap Road Projects

Despite some notable cuts in the transportation budget, we were able to maintain funding for and in some cases advance a series of Kitsap County road projects. That includes the Burley-Olalla Interchange, which should wrap up by year's end, nearly a year ahead of schedule. Safety improvements already are underway along Sedgwick Road and construction will begin on replacing the Manette Bridge next year.



A member of the Senate Transportation Committee, Sen. Derek Kilmer has been an advocate for holding the line on ferry fares and tolls over the Tacoma Narrows Bridge

Making Highway 302 Safer

Funding also was secured for safety improvements along Highway 302 in Pierce County. More than \$7.5 million will improve safety at the Purdy interchange and along the Wauna curves. We're also pursuing safety corridor designation to help lure additional state and federal dollars for this highway. And we are continuing a study to identify a possible new corridor to the Key Peninsula.

Reforming Washington State Ferries



Given the budget situation, this year figured to be a daunting one for the state's ferry system. But in the end the

Legislature approved a transportation budget that did not cut service in any way and held the line on fares. Fare increases were limited to no more than 2.5 percent.

The budget also calls for the purchasing of four new vessels over the next four years. And the Joint Transportation Committee has been directed to review the ferry system to look for cost-saving efficiencies.

Special thanks go to Rep. Larry Seaquist and all the citizens who helped deliver this victory.

Supporting Those Who Sacrifice for All of Us

No one makes more sacrifices on our behalf than the members of our armed services and their families. The Legislature recognized that this year and approved a series of bills to provide additional support.

We approved what is known as the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunities for Military Children — an agreement between Washington and other states to ensure kids whose parents serve aren't disadvantaged in school.

Another bill I co-sponsored that was signed into law will require the state Department of Veterans Affairs to create a five-year plan to identify all veterans living in Washington and highlight improved referral methods and communications tools to ensure veterans get access to the services they need. Also approved was a bill to close an inadvertent loophole in a law that previously excluded some National Guard members and reservists from accessing county Veteran Assistance funds.

A perennial problem for many divorced or separated military couples involves parenting plans. Military schedules and duties are often unaccommodating and

long deployments can put custody and visitation rights at risk. The Legislature this year passed my bill to add special flexibility for members of our armed forces.

Finally, our new construction budget includes money to help repair, renovate and modernize facilities at the Washington Veterans Home at Retsil, near Port Orchard. These improvements will enable better services for our veterans.

