



# Senator Pam Roach

## 31st DISTRICT REPORT

SPRING 2010



### *From the Senator's Desk ...*

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you in Olympia and here at home. I love the people of our district and consider it an honor to work with individuals or groups to help resolve our issues.

The 2010 session was very busy and very important. Never before have the decisions in Olympia more directly affected every citizen. The economy and jobs were my major concern. Without a strong economy, our taxpayers are left with a terrible burden, more jobs are lost, and key services to those in need are reduced. Unfortunately, the majority party failed to implement a sustainable budget that would help end the recession.

This session, I fought for our Constitutional rights and to protect the voter-approved "two-thirds vote requirement" to pass tax increases. Initiative 960, the Taxpayer Protection Act, was suspended by Democrats to allow passage of new taxes. This initiative was approved by a 57 percent "yes" vote in our district. I voted NO on the repeal of I-960.

Right now, we have a one-party Legislature that used an extra 29 days in a special session to finally reach their own agreement to raise taxes. I voted NO on the majority's \$1.7 billion tax package. I felt you wanted more accountability in government than was being offered. I argued against the tax increases aimed at families and small business. I argued for our Constitutional rights and open government.

The state budget should never be in a deficit spiral and we need to restore the two-thirds vote requirement of I-960.

Please take a moment to read about the important issues summarized in this newsletter. And, always feel free to call me at home on 253-735-4210.

Best Wishes,

Senator Pam Roach

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### **Senate committee assignments:**

- Government Operations and Elections (Ranking Member)
- Judiciary
- Early Learning and K-12 Education
- Joint Select Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

### **Memberships:**

- Sentencing Guidelines Commission
- Auburn/Bonney Lake/Buckley/Enumclaw Chambers of Commerce
- Bail Practices Work Group
- Sunshine Committee (Public Records Exemptions Accountability Committee)
- Washington Institute for Public Policy
- Friends of Rainier



## Legislature Removes Taxpayer Protections

On February 24, the governor signed into law Senate Bill 6130, a measure that guts Initiative 960, the “Taxpayer Protection Act” approved by a vote of the people in 2007. As you know, I have been a leader in the legislature to shine more light on the workings of state government. It wasn’t just the tax protection that went out the window with the removal of I-960. There were several “light-of-day” provisions that were also suspended. Not only did this bill open the flood gates to new and higher taxes, it closed the door on the people’s right to know.

“Killing I-960 has opened Pandora’s Box and unleashed many taxes that the people do not want.”

— Pam Roach, in her floor speech before voting against the removal of I-960.



### SB 6130 nullified I-960, “The Taxpayer Protection Act”

- Suspended the two-thirds vote requirement for the legislature to increase taxes;
- Eliminated the required citizen advisory vote on this year’s tax increases;
- Eliminated the provision requiring the names of legislators that voted for tax increases be printed in voters pamphlets; And,
- Contained an emergency clause — which puts it into law immediately and takes away our ability to put SB 6130 to a vote of the people through our Constitutional right of referendum.

*“The people of this state do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies that serve them. The people...do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may maintain control over the instruments that they have created...” Washington’s Open Public Meeting Act, I-276, (1972)*

## Seeking Open Government

I want citizens to be able to watchdog our government and that is why I have made government accountability a high priority.

This session, I introduced SB 6529 (Roach, 2010), “The Light of Day Act,” which would have opened doors that have been closed for too long. Without transparency, there can be no accountability in government. An accountable government is an open government.

The “Light of Day Act” would have placed a pro-active responsibility on government agencies to provide information to the public via computer terminals. This information could be accessed by the public during normal business hours. If an agency could not provide such a computer

terminal, they would partner with other agencies to provide the information. The underlying goal is to allow citizens the ability to surf freely through non-exempt government documents.

**I believe we should be able to view government at home from our personal computers.**

Currently, citizens must file public disclosure requests to obtain information. Documents are costly to retrieve and to duplicate. SB 6529 would have “eliminated the middle man,” and given citizen direct access to **their** information.

Open government is a cornerstone of democracy and I will continue to work to make government more open.

## The “Alexis Stuth Act” – Placing Families First

Enumclaw’s Doug and Ann Marie Stuth had raised their granddaughter, Alexis, from birth to age 1 1/2 years. Later, they spent many hours with her during the state’s attempt to reunite Alexis with her teen mother. The Stuths were devastated when the state took Alexis from her mother and placed her not with them...but in the foster-adopt custody of a stranger.

The state completely ignored all of the well-qualified biological relatives that volunteered to take Alexis. The state never considered the Stuths who were lied about in court by the state. Relatives have no “standing” in court and cannot defend themselves or speak in their own behalf under placement hearings. That is just wrong.

My proposal, Senate Bill 6416 (Roach, 2010), which would have granted standing to relatives, passed the Senate unanimously. But, the bill was

amended in the House of Representatives to put foster parents on equal footing as relatives. Most certainly, the Senate refused to concur with the House and the bill died for this session. A similar bill will be introduced next year.

Thanks to the efforts of the Stuths and KING 5 News, the current policy of denying qualified relatives placement was brought to the attention of the general public.

The Department of Social and Health Services has a terrible record of protecting children. They take children from intact extended families on one hand and allow children to stay in dangerous placements on the other. More than one child a month dies under the auspices of Child Protective Services. The system needs to be investigated and changed if we are to truly help children.



*Anne Marie, Alexis (now 4), and Doug Stuth testified on SB 6416. Senator Roach’s bill would have given grandparents and other relatives the right to speak in court during child placement hearings. After a long and heartbreaking struggle, Alexis was eventually adopted by her grandparents. Please watch their story at KING5.com, “Up Front,” or click here to see it on my Senate webpage. Also, KOMO news produced an excellent expose’ on children dying within the CPS system.*

## Tough Times and Taxes

**“Washington’s per capita debt load is now roughly twice the national average.”**

— State Treasurer, James L. McIntire

Right now our state is in a deep recession and we have all suffered in some degree over losses of jobs, homes, number of work hours and investments. Seniors, particularly, are hit hard because

***Times are tough for the many small businesses in our district. As Auburn Reporter editor Mark Klaas put it:***

“For proprietors with shops along narrow Main Street, Auburn, USA, these are long, tough days. Business remains slow for restaurateurs and retailers trying to regain their financial footing in a deep and devastating recession. Aside from loyal customers, the sidewalk traffic is sporadic at best, and the grim realization is setting in that it will be a slow, agonizing recovery, especially for those who earn a living in the heart of the city.”

they do not have the work years ahead of them to make up the losses. I take calls almost every day from constituents in need.

Dr. Arun Raha, the director of the state’s Economic and Revenue Forecast Council, has said at each dismal fore-

cast since the recession began that our economy will not recover until people start spending money again. The trouble is, people who have lost their jobs and people afraid they might lose their jobs, do not feed the economy with purchases outside the basics.

Main Street shop owners are doing all they can to keep their doors open by cutting back on expenses. That often means employee lay-offs. The cost of doing business in this state is already high. The new taxes imposed this session will mean more job loss.

Sadly, the legislature added new taxes that directly affect small businesses. Taxing candy, cig-

arettes, and bottled water sounds like a small thing but when business operates on a small profit margin ... during a recession ... more good jobs are lost.

### Taxes

Our state Constitution requires a balanced state budget which I strongly support. If it did not, we would undoubtedly be in deep debt like California. However, that does not mean the concept of spending more than you have escaped majority budget votes.

- The 2010 budget relies on \$618 million dollars of federal stimulus money yet to be received.
- Federal stimulus money should go for capital projects. We would get not only needed jobs, but a road, or a building, or a bridge to show for it.
- This year a state income tax was considered in the Senate. I voted NO on the imposition of a state income tax. We do not want a new government bureaucracy taxing our personal and business income.



**Open House**  
**Visit Our New District Office**  
**Wednesday, May 19th • 4-7pm**

311 Auburn Ave. No., Auburn  
 (across from the donut shop)

Discussions Welcomed

## Protecting Police Officers and the Public

Last year's slaying of police officers brought to light needed changes in our public safety laws. I came to the 2010 session resolved to make those changes.

I believe we accomplished a great deal, but as always, I will continue to work to close sentencing loopholes and promote public safety.

Here is a brief summary of the new laws:

### House Joint Memorial 4220 (SJM 8218) Roach co-sponsor

This measure is a constitutional amendment that requires voter approval. If approved, judges will be allowed to prohibit bail for offenders accused



of crimes that may result in a mandatory life sentence upon conviction.

(This is aimed at those who currently have two strikes.

They would

not be allowed bail until the trial for their third strike finds them innocent.) The killer of the four Lakewood Police Officers, Maurice Clemmons, would not have been eligible for bail if this provision had been in place last fall.

### House Bill 2625

This new law allows for immediate implementation of SJM 8218, when passed by the voters this fall. It authorizes a judge to order pretrial detention for a person charged with a capital offense or an offense punishable by life in prison if the judge finds by clear and convincing evidence that:

- the person has a propensity for violence that creates a substantial likelihood of danger to the community or other persons; and
- no conditions of release will reasonably assure the safety of another or the community.



Senator Roach joins as the governor signs SB 6673 at the Lakewood Police Department. This measure establishes a work group within existing resources to study and make recommendations regarding bail practices and procedures. Also pictured, is Lakewood's Senator Mike Carrell. A tribute to the slain officers is seen the background.

Senator Roach, the bill's co-sponsor, is one of only four legislators to be appointed to the Bail Practices Work Group which also includes law enforcement, prosecutors and judges. The group will make recommendations to the legislature on how to close loopholes in state and national bail practices.

### Senate Bill 6293

This bill increases the penalty for relatives who render criminal assistance (as was done for Maurice Clemmons). Prior to this new law, the maximum a relative could have been charged with was a class C felony. This measure increases the crime to a class B felony under certain conditions.

### House Bill 2777

This new law allows an offender's domestic violence history to be considered at sentencing in a subsequent domestic violence



case. The goal is to keep chronic abusers in jail longer and allow their victims to start a new life.

## Ad Hoc Committee Formed for Rainier School and Respite Care

We need to enhance the public's appreciation for this community icon.

Every year Rainier School is targeted for closure and the 2011 session will be no exception. The only way to protect this asset is to advance a broadened agenda for the facility and publicize its value. We must influence public opinion. Legislators who live out of our area need to have reasons to protect Rainier School. To this end, I created an Ad Hoc Committee\* to promote Rainier School. We need to build a structured and proactive approach to save Rainier School.

Closing Rainier School should not be an option. Rainier School is the keystone of Washington State residential habilitation centers. It is home to the most vulnerable in our communities. It constitutes 1/3 of the local Buckley economy and is staffed by kind, dedicated and professional people.

Our vision includes expanding the role of Rainier School to provide such services as respite care for in-home family caregivers; creating a research/learn-

ing facility in partnership with teaching programs at Green River Community College; re-opening closed facilities, like the bowling alley and the swimming pool to include public use. The pool, by the way, was not paid for by the taxpayers but by Friends of Rainier through donations.

This is just a snapshot of a new vision that is shared by many. I invite you to read the white paper, "A New Vision for Rainier School," on my Senate web page or call the office for a copy.

\* **Members of the Ad Hoc Committee** are: Pam Roach, Chair; Rep. Dan Roach; Rep. Chris Hurst; Buckley Mayor Pat Johnson; Enumclaw Mayor Liz Reynolds; Pierce County Councilman Shawn Bunney; Tom Dean and Bob Gee (Friends of Rainier); Carole Dottlich; Sue Hendrickson and Matt Zuvick (Washington Federation of State Employees); Judelle Sonneson (Service Employees International Union); and the Enumclaw and Buckley Chambers of Commerce.



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