



# Senator Pam Roach

## 31st DISTRICT REPORT

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

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

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the privilege and honor of representing you in Olympia and here at home. The 2009 legislative session was a difficult one where tough decisions surrounding the budget had to be made.

Unfortunately, this session will go down in history as an example of wrong priorities in the most difficult economy since the Great Depression. While state revenue remained essentially the same, it was lower than projected and budget cuts were inevitable.

I voted against the budget this year because it failed to prioritize education and other essential services, while still taking us down the road towards higher taxes.

Despite my opposition, the legislature gave local governments the option to raise taxes at a time when families are already struggling. If you live in King County, SB 5433 will allow the county council to raise your property tax by 7.5 cents for every \$1000 of assessed value. It will also allow local transit districts to ask voters for a new \$20 car tab. I voted "no" to these increases.

There were real successes this year apart from the budget difficulties. My amendment (HB 2261 S AMD 394) to include highly capable education in the definition of a basic education passed both houses of the legislature. This is a victory; all children should have the opportunity to reach their potential.

My resolution to bring awareness and support for families struggling with autism passed the Senate unanimously and I co-sponsored several bills to assist veterans that were passed into law.

Additionally, I held two events during the session to expose the need for accountability within DSHS. The citizens' rally and special legislative hearing brought together concerned individuals and experts to call for change and accountability in a system that is failing children and families across the state.

Thank you again for allowing me to represent you. Please call on me at any time for assistance or if you have questions or comments. It is my pleasure to serve you and our district.

Faithfully,

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 (co-chair)

### **State-created citizen committee assignments:**

- State Autism Task Force
- Sunshine Committee (Public Records Exemptions Accountability Committee)
- Governor's Council on Substance Abuse
- Washington Institute for Public Policy
- Sentencing Guidelines Commission
- Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

## Education should have been a top priority – it wasn't

The 2009-10 operating budget does not prioritize education over the other demands of the budget. That is one of the main reasons I opposed the budget this year.

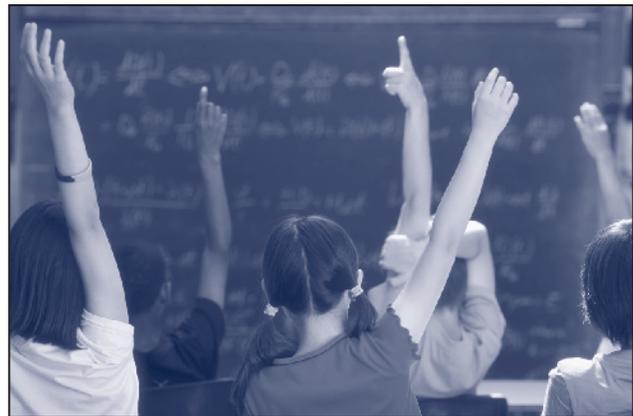


...the education of our children is too important to be on the chopping block.

~Senator Pam Roach

For instance, voter-approved initiatives I-728 and I-732 were suspended in the final budget. I-728 allowed our school districts to reduce class sizes, expand learning opportunities, increase teacher training, invest in early childhood education, and build classrooms for K-12 and higher education.

Enumclaw school district, for instance, lost the funding for their excellent all-day kindergarten program with the suspension of I-728. I-732 was also suspended which provided cost of living increases for teachers.



The failure to prioritize education will put many great teachers out of work.

In this current economic climate, budget cuts are inevitable and necessary. However, the education of our children is too important to be on the chopping block.

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*(ESHB 1244, Operating Budget: Pam Roach votes "no," Dan Roach votes "no," Christopher Hurst votes "yes")*

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## Legislature authorizes local governments to increase taxes including a new car tab fee – I voted "No" to these increases

During the late hours of the last day of the legislative session, **Second Substitute Senate Bill 5433** passed the Legislature with an unusual tie-breaking vote by the Lt. Governor. 2SSB5433 will allow local governments to do three things.

First, it allows King County, without voter approval, to raise property taxes by 7.5 cents for every \$1000 of assessed value.

It will also allow local transit agencies to seek voter approval for an additional \$20 car tab fee. Voters have affirmed and re-affirmed a \$30 limit on car tab fees. They do not want to pay more. Unfortunately, local transit districts will ger-

rymander the districts to ensure passage of the additional \$20 fee per vehicle.

Lastly, this bill allows local governments to transfer funding once dedicated for certain voter-approved purposes, such as police and fire, for use in other areas.

I voted "no" on 2SSB5433 just as I strongly opposed all measures to increase taxes. Increasing the tax burden at a time when individuals and families are already struggling under a difficult economy is the wrong course of action.

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*(SB 5433: Pam Roach votes "no," Dan Roach votes "no," Christopher Hurst votes "no.")*

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## Open Government

**Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1018** passed the Legislature despite my “no” vote. ESHB 1018 changes the way special elections are held. Special elections, no matter how noble the cause, always run the risk of taking voters by surprise because of the limited notice required for these elections.

Auburn and Enumclaw residents will remember the 2006 attempt made by the Public Hospital District #1 to raise property taxes by hundreds of dollars. I chaired the citizen’s group that defeated the effort, but this took a little less than 60 days. It takes time to mount an opposition to a special election proposal that a community opposes.

ESHB 1018 allows a resolution calling for a special election to be filed only 45 days prior to the special election date. This is a change from the previous 52 day requirement. Shortening the required notice for a special election limits transparency in government and narrows the opportunity for any opposition to organize.

Be assured that I will always stand up for open government and fair elections.

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*(HB 1018: Pam Roach votes “no,” Dan Roach votes “no,” Christopher Hurst votes “yes.”)*

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*Citizens gather on the capitol steps to voice their opposition to over-taxation.*

## Making your views known— No new taxes

On Tax Day, April 15th, a “Tea Party” – Taxed Enough Already – took place in Olympia. 5,500 Washington taxpayers gathered on the steps of the State Capitol to make their voices heard in strong opposition to over-taxation and over-spending.

I will continue to fight against higher taxes and irresponsible spending in the state legislature. This is especially important when 10% of our workers are now jobless.



## Honoring and supporting individuals and families with Autism

I introduced **Senate Resolution 8629** to raise awareness for Autism, which is the fastest growing developmental disability in America.

There is no known cause or cure for autism, but through research, training, and public support we can better equip individuals with autism and their families.

I am pleased that this resolution was co-sponsored by 29 Senators and adopted by the entire Senate. This strong showing of public support is a step in the right direction toward greater awareness for Autism and support for those who deal with its symptoms on a daily basis.

*Senator Roach speaks in the capitol rotunda at a rally to support families dealing with autism.*



Capitol rotunda: families and concerned citizens hear from community leaders at rally to hold CPS accountable.

## My fight to hold CPS accountable continues

On April 16th at noon, I acted as co-chairwoman for a special Legislative hearing I called to shine light on failings within the Child Protective Services (CPS). As I am sure you are aware, many stories of abuse and corruption within this division of DSHS have come to light recently. This broken system is failing many of the children and families it was created to protect.

The hearing room was packed to hear community leaders and citizens from around the state, including Prosecutor Tim Rasmussen, to point out the laws that are being ignored by the agency and the horrific effects the current system can have on children and families.

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### WORKING WITH THE PRESS

**Early this session, King5 “UpFront” covered the story of an Enumclaw family I helped who was being wronged by CPS. The state wanted a 3 year old child taken from her biological family even though the grandparents and an aunt and uncle were a suitable and appropriate placement. The state needs to follow the law and place children with qualified family members.**

**I will continue to fight for increased accountability and efficiency within DSHS. We cannot stand by and watch another child endangered or another family needlessly torn apart due to a broken system.**

## Supporting our Veterans

As co-chair of the Joint Select Committee for Veterans and Military Affairs, I remain committed to supporting our veterans. This session I co-sponsored three bills that were passed by the Legislature to support our military.

- **Senate Bill 5035** improves veteran’s access to important social and health services.
- **Senate Bill 5009** allows unemployment benefit charge relief for an employer who hires an employee who is a member of the Reserves or National Guard, is deployed, and then returns to work after their service.
- **Senate Bill 5481** makes any deceased veteran, who has not been claimed in 90 days, eligible for an honorable burial in a state or federal veteran’s cemetery.

## Keeping our Communities Safe

As a member of the Sentencing Guidelines Commission, I am very concerned about the passage of **Senate Bill 6167** which weakens penalties for offenders convicted of property crimes. I voted against this measure. SB 6167 increases the amount an offender can steal before they are punished!

Under current law, it is a class B felony to steal or damage property valued at more than \$1,500. Under SB 6167, that value would now have to be more than \$5,000. The bill also raises the threshold for class C felony theft and property damage from at least \$250 to \$750. This bill passed both houses and has been signed by the Governor.

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*(SB 6167: Pam Roach votes “no,” Dan Roach was excused, Christopher Hurst votes “yes.”)*

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On a positive note, I co-sponsored **Senate Bill 5012** which passed both the Senate and House of Representatives unanimously. This legislation requires the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to increase efficiency in the recovery of missing persons. The bill states the WSP must develop and

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*Keeping our Communities Safe (cont. from previous page)*

implement an Amber Alert Plan and an “endangered missing person advisory plan” to enhance cooperation and public assistance in recovering abducted children.

SB 5012, if it would have been in effect a few years ago, could have saved the life of a grandfather in our district.

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*(SB 5012 passed the legislature unanimously.)*

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## Flood Insurance

Senate Bill 5417, which I co-sponsored, requires insurers to give clear written notice to homeowners and renters if their policies do not cover damage by flood. They must also provide information regarding the National Flood Insurance Program so that individuals have access to information that will provide them with the insurance they need.

We have seen firsthand the devastating impact flooding can have on a community. Many homeowners were surprised to find that their insurance did not cover the damage. This legislation will help to prepare homeowners or renters who might otherwise be caught unawares.

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*(SB 5417 passed the legislature unanimously.)*

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## The Budget – missed opportunities and wrong priorities

The 2009 Legislature was confronted with a deficit this session; the largest deficit in state history. As hopeless as that sounds, we could have taken steps to lessen the blow to our state’s budget and prioritize our spending. Only two years ago, our state had a record surplus due to a booming housing market. In 2005-07 our state revenues grew by 21.4%, which is revenue growth higher than any biennium on record.

Do you think government saved that excess revenue? No, we didn’t. And now we find ourselves with a record deficit because of over spending and a failure to prepare for the future.

A fact you do not hear much out of Olympia is that the state has not had a decrease in revenue. It is less revenue than was projected, but there is revenue growth. This budget came down to priorities and learning a lesson from the current economy in order to prepare for the future.

I supported **Senate Joint Resolution 8209**, which would have required the Legislature, through a constitutional amendment, to save extraordinary revenue in good times so we would be prepared for difficult economic times. This measure would help to prevent a budget crisis like the one we are in today.

Unfortunately, while this legislation passed the Senate with my “yes” vote, House Democratic leadership did not bring it up for a vote. The resolution, therefore, did not pass.

Instead of prioritizing our spending and matching our spending growth to our revenue growth, the budget relied heavily on one-time federal money and cut funds for essential priorities such as education.

I supported taking early action on the budget to compound savings, making structural reforms, and correctly prioritizing our spending.

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*(ESHB 1244, Operating Budget: Pam Roach votes “no,” Dan Roach votes “no,” Christopher Hurst votes “yes”)*

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## Saving Lake Tapps – a long-term solution is in sight

After ten years of hard work, we are close to a long-term solution to guarantee the survival of Lake Tapps. What remains is for the Department of Ecology to issue a water right with flow requirements consistent with the Lake Tapps Task Force

recommendations. A memorandum of agreement has already been signed between the Lake Tapps Community and the Cascade Water Alliance. This is a big step towards a final solution. I will continue to make this a top priority.

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