

2012 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



36TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

SENATOR JEANNE KOHL-WELLES

Stay in touch!

Please keep me informed of your ideas, concerns and community activities.

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Senate Committees:

- Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection-Chair
- Judiciary
- Ways & Means
- Rules

Other involvements (selected):

- Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
- Joint Legislative Systems Committee
- Washington State Arts Commission
- Washington Institute on Public Policy
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
- Joint Higher Education Committee

Dear Neighbors,

On April 11th, the Legislature adjourned what was without doubt one of the most trying sessions in memory. During the last weeks of session, the Senate Republicans were able to push through a “ninth order” procedural motion that allowed them to pass their version of the budget that had no chance of going forward in the House.

Ultimately, the Senate was able to work through partisan politics and pass a budget with an overwhelmingly bipartisan 44-2 vote. For the first time in four years, the budget made no cuts to K-12 and higher education and, combined with a jobs bill that will create 18,000 jobs in our state, will help Washington continue our economic recovery and fight back from the effects of the Great Recession. I was pleased that an informal progressive group of senators that I helped convene was able to influence the final outcome—a fair approach to balancing the budget, including closure of two ineffective tax preferences. You can access the operating and capital budgets at www.leap.wa.gov.

I am now in Seattle, working out of my district office and would welcome meeting with you. Please call my district office for an appointment: (206) 281-6854.

Thank you for allowing me to serve the 36th District, it is truly a privilege.

Sincerely,

Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles

I send out regular e-newsletters with updates on legislative activities and other important information about government in Washington. If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to sign up for my distribution list by visiting my website, www.sdc.wa.gov/senators/kohlwelles, and clicking on the e-news sign-up button.

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My e-Newsletter!

Honored as champion for affordable housing and an end to homelessness

I am pleased to be honored again this year by the Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance as a champion in the fight for affordable housing and ending homelessness. I worked with Sen. David Frockt and advocates to pass the Fair Tenant Screening Act, Senate Bill 6315, which created the first steps toward eliminating unfair screening barriers.

And, over 28,000 people will be assisted in avoiding homelessness because of House Bill 2048 which increases the local homeless housing and assistance surcharge temporarily from \$30 to \$40, requires the Department of Commerce to work with interested landlords regarding housing available for vouchers, and to determine any issues with surcharge fees (I sponsored the companion, SB 5952). We successfully included \$67 million for the Housing Trust Fund (housing assistance), which included funding for housing projects for the homeless and people at-risk

of being homeless, low-income households, people with chronic mental illness and developmental disabilities, and farmworkers.



Transportation budget for 2011-13

The nearly \$9.8 billion transportation budget (HB 2190) maintains current levels of service and ensures uninterrupted work on current projects for the remainder of the biennium, so that the Legislature can use the next biennium to address the structural deficiencies behind the state's declining gas tax revenues.

Supplemental budget highlights include:

- A second, 144-car capacity ferry.
- Restoration of the Washington State Patrol's auto theft program and funds for an additional trooper cadet class.
- Reduction of the Dept. of Transportation's highway maintenance backlog to meet urgent preservation needs on the state's roadways.
- Purchase of fuel for ferry operations.
- Support for transit service distributed to public transit agencies in Washington based on service hours, service miles and passenger trips provided.

I was disappointed we were unable to pass legislation to provide the means for enhancing transit funding at the local level and intend to address this important effort in 2013.

Capital budget for 2011-2013

Working with Reps. Reuven Caryle and Mary Lou Dickerson I was pleased we succeeded in obtaining \$2.5 million for the Josephinum that provides 221 apartments for low-income individuals, nearly \$1 million for the Phinney Neighborhood Association, and \$531,000 for the Seattle Theater Group.

Goodbye to my seatmate, Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson

My seatmate, Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson, has announced she is retiring after representing the 36th District since 1994. Rep. Dickerson always stayed true to her passion to enact policies to benefit children and families.

The 36th District is a better place because of her. It has been an honor to work with her and I wish her the very best in her next endeavors.

Washington now seventh state in nation to embrace marriage equality



Kohl-Welles speaks in favor of marriage equality bill as governor and colleagues look on.

Although our state and country have achieved significant support for equality for women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and different religions, we've not done so well in ending "separate but equal" laws relating to marriage. That all changed on Feb. 13th when the governor officially signed SB 6239 into law, allowing all families to receive the respect and dignity they deserve. However, a referendum on this new law has been filed with the Secretary of State and, if enough signatures are collected, the law will be placed on the ballot in November.

Many wins achieved in the fight against human trafficking

Gov. Chris Gregoire has signed into law a bipartisan anti-trafficking bill, SB 6251, which I sponsored, to keep minors from being exploited through online ads for adult escort services such as *Backpage.com*. This is in addition to 11 other new laws that fight anti-trafficking.



Kohl-Welles with Gov. Gregoire and other anti-trafficking advocates at bill signing.

I am ecstatic this anti-trafficking legislation is now law, the first of its kind in the country. This makes the strongest possible statement against selling of minors online—or anywhere—in our state.

The law creates a new offense, making it illegal to knowingly publish an adult escort ad that involves a minor. To avoid possible

criminal charges, classified advertising companies can be provided an affirmative defense to prosecution if the advertiser can produce documentation showing it verified the age of the person in person with a government issued I.D.

Backpage.com, whose parent company is *Village Voice*, makes at least \$22 million a year from online adult escort ads, but refuses to verify the ages of those who place the ads or are depicted in them. It's particularly appalling as its print edition published in the *Seattle Weekly* requires in-person age verification. But the lack of doing so in its online editions results in minors being sold into prostitution and sex-trafficking. Unfortunately, *Backpage.com* filed a lawsuit on June 4th to block the law's taking effect on June 7th. We'll see what happens.

Continuing the fight against human trafficking, I was honored to be one of two American legislators to participate recently in a conference held in Hawaii on anti-trafficking and human rights in the Pacific Rim. I was joined by local elected officials, scholars and non-profit representatives from Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. On May 11th, I led a panel on anti-trafficking legislation at a Human Trafficking, Forced Labor and Corporate Responsibility Continuing Legal Education seminar convened by University of Washington and Seattle University Law Schools and UW Women's Center. I also serve on the UW Women's Center Anti-Trafficking Task Force.

Tax incentive for Washington film production revived

A new law, SB 5539, revives the tax incentive program that expired last July to attract film and television production to Washington.

We have tourists from all over the world going to the town of Forks because it was the setting of the hit vampire book and movie series, *Twilight*. That's great, but think of the economic impact for the state if the movies had actually been filmed in Forks (instead of in Oregon and Vancouver), with locally-hired cast and crew members and all food and lodging expenses going straight into the local economy. I am very pleased to have sponsored this legislation to continue to spur job creation and growth in our economy.

The film incentives program has generated nearly \$70 million for Washington workers and businesses since it started in 2007. Right now, 39 states offer some kind of incentive to attract big movie projects.

Other bills I introduced, signed into law

- **SB 6095** changes gender-specific terms and references in our state laws to be gender-neutral.
- **SB 6486** authorizes collective bargaining for postdoctoral and clinical research employees at UW and WSU.
- **SB 6167** authorizes the Washington State Patrol to provide background checks of prospective clients or residents at no cost to homeless shelters and transitional facilities.
- **SB 6574** authorizes City of Seattle to collect admissions taxes at Huskies football games played at Century Link Field in the fall of 2012 while Husky Stadium is being renovated. Most of the proceeds are directed to arts organizations.
- **SB 5715** adopts core competencies for early care and education professionals.

New "Penn State" law expands mandatory reporting of child abuse/neglect in higher education

Legislation I introduced, SB 5991, requiring higher education employees to report suspected child abuse or neglect, has been signed into law.

In following the horrific media coverage of the Penn State University abuse scandal last fall, I knew we had to add higher education employees as mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect. There are an increasing number of children on our college campuses for sports, academic camps and child care programs. It is imperative we do all we can to ensure their protection. I was proud to work with Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson on this new law that will strengthen our ability to avoid a Penn State situation here in Washington.

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