

Senator Adam Kline

37TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT • SUMMER 2009



Senator Adam Kline

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Dear Neighbors,

This was my thirteenth session as your Senator, and my hardest four months ever in Olympia. Our \$9 billion drop in forecasted revenue made for a budget that satisfies no one, not the Governor who proposed a first version, not the Senate Ways and Means members – myself included – who wrote the second, not our House counterparts who wrote the third, and certainly not that majority of Washingtonians who share my abiding belief that government is not the problem but an aid in the solution.

A detailed article on this **worst-ever budget** appears first here, with some analysis of the component parts of interest to most folks. Then we go to the **Capital, or Construction, Budget**, including some local projects. From there we go to some successes in **criminal sentencing reform** (okay, okay, it's my thing) and the prospect of **rehabilitated ex-felons voting**. Then on to the environmental issues: **our local response to climate change: transit-oriented communities**, and a summary. We then focus on a matter in which Southeast Seattle has a greater stake than most districts: **General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U)**. And finally, a summary of **my twelve bills that passed this year**.

I have only these few pages to cram this in – and I heard from some of you that my last newsletter was a little too crammed – so if the stuff you're most stoked about doesn't appear here, I want you to call me and I'll give you the straight scoop. My phone number and e-mail are on the left of this page. You live in the Fighting 37th, so don't be shy about politics! You guys keep talkin' to me, and that's why I love this job!

Justice and Peace,


Adam

The Budget: Pain Management

On the 104th day of the 105-day legislative session, the Legislature gave final approval to a \$31.4 billion budget that did not increase general revenues. While we were able to preserve some important programs like the General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) program, the budget made deep cuts to education, health care and social services.

Several bills proposed significant new taxation: in the House, HB 2377 (Rep. Pettigrew) would have added 3/10 of a cent to the retail sales tax for a three-year period and would have applied the Working Families Tax Rebate, which would provide low and moderate income families with a sales tax rebate if they qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. In the Senate, SB 6147 (Senators Kohl-Welles and Kline) would have created an income tax payable by individuals earning \$500,000 or more per year and couples earning \$1 million or more. The House bill was passed from committee but died in the House; the Senate bill was denied a hearing in committee.

Without additional revenue to mitigate its cuts, this budget is fair only in one narrow sense of the word: that it hurts many different groups of people more or less equally. It is not sustainable, in that it relies on almost \$3 billion in federal stimulus aid, funds that we can't expect to see again next year. It is not adequate, particularly in healthcare. In higher education, it raises tuition 28 percent over the next two years, creating a barrier to the sons and daughters of working families, whose parents hope like all parents for their children to rise higher – and thus it abdicates the role of higher education as the Great Equalizer. Even in K-12 education, our paramount duty, where we cut only 2.2 percent, it falls far short of the mark for children in Seattle's already-underfunded schools.

By balancing the budget with federal funds and our existing revenues only, we have failed our collective duty to our most vulnerable, our students, our elderly, and our low-income taxpayers who bear the greater share of the tax-burden under our shredded remnant of a tax-structure. Our greatest failure is in not having a new tax source, such as a progressive income tax. (Our state has the most regressive taxing system in the nation, in that individuals in the lowest 20 percent of the tax bracket pay 17 percent of their annual income in state taxes, and individuals in the top 20 percent of the tax bracket pay less than 3 percent.)

While popular support for either proposed tax – or both – is strong in our 37th District, and throughout Seattle, it was simply not sufficient elsewhere in the state to allow enough colleagues to join us progressives in supporting a Referendum. The conversation on this subject has been constant among Democratic Senators. Despite the efforts of our progressives, we couldn't muster from our 31 members the 25 votes needed to place a tax-increase of any kind on the November ballot. The situation was the same in the House, despite Rep. Pettigrew's efforts. The result is a miserable Republican-style budget.

One bright spot in this abysmal year is the progress we made in criminal justice and sentencing. Arguments I have made for years – for greater emphasis on drug-treatment for addicts accused of crime, for modernization of our laws on property crimes and for less severe sentencing – have finally succeeded. Arguments on the basis of social and legal policy have been joined by fiscal arguments – and the belated realization that incarceration costs money and that too much incarceration costs too much money. Many of these items are incorporated in the budget – as savings, not as expenditures – and for this reason alone I decided to hold my nose and vote Yes on the dismal Operating Budget bill.

I believe that a year's worth of a No New Taxes budget will be sufficient to turn the tide of public opinion in favor of more adequate revenues and that my colleagues will see their path to a comprehensive re-structuring of our taxes. Indeed, this may prove to be the teachable moment. I look forward to helping to lead the movement in the Senate toward a Referendum in 2010 or 2011. I expect that we will reach this goal.

More generally, I believe that we will survive the current economic recession – more than survive, we will return in full force and prevail in our effort to re-create a state that works for low-income people and our most vulnerable. We do not know how long this recession will last, but we'll last longer.

Operating Budget, Overall

- Total 09-11 operating budget: \$31.4 billion – \$1.2 billion less than 07-09 budget.
- Program and public employee compensation cuts: \$4.3 billion.
- Use of federal stimulus funds: \$3 billion.
- Use of reserves or fund transfers: \$1.5 billion.
- Total reserves left to protect against any further economic deterioration: \$822 million.

K-12 Education and Colleges/Universities

- Cuts to school districts average 2.2 percent.
- Initiative-728 (class size reduction) and I-732 (teacher raises) suspended.
- Class size reductions fully funded for our early learners in grades K-4.
- 9,028 college/university enrollment slots cut.
- Tuition raised by 28 percent at four-year schools, 14 percent at community colleges.
- After tuition increases total cuts to colleges and universities are between 6-7 percent.

Health/Human Services

- Basic Health Plan cut by 43 percent, reducing the program by 40,000 slots for the working-poor.
- Public Health: reduced by \$4 million in this biennium.
- Health care funding: Funding for insurance for employees in K-12, Higher Ed, home care workers, state agencies, and covered childcare workers was increased by 3% per year, which is substantially less than projected cost of medical inflation.
- No reductions to Medicare Part D premium support or to adult vision.
- Adult Day Health: funding was eliminated for transportation, but services were retained for those who live in their own homes.



- General Assistance – Unemployable (GA-U): Cash grants were reduced by \$18.6 million and medical aid was reduced by \$37 million. Beneficial changes were made in the program to make it work better for recipients.
- Nursing homes: 4 percent rate cut.
- Family Planning: Reduced state funding by \$4 million. The cut is \$500,000 in 2010 and \$3.5 million in 2011. I believe federal government will replace much of the 2011 cut; if not, we can revisit the issue in the 2010 or 2011 sessions.
- Adult dental: Cut by 4 percent.

Cuts to state government

- Up to 8,000 layoffs of public employees and teachers.
- Exempt and management staff salaries frozen.
- State contributions to pensions reduced.

Capital Budget

Two years ago, one of the Seattle dailies had a front-page article describing what it called “pork,” by which the writer meant all allocations from the Capital Budget for specific buildings or other capital projects. Certain districts, it seems, got more dollars’ worth than others. Whoopee! It must have been a slow news day. Leading the pack in the paper’s listing was none other than the 37th District, whose three legislators had apparently outdone our colleagues in “bringing home the bacon.” You’d think from the tone of the article that we were in need of a good perp-walk down Rainier Avenue, such were our sins.

There will be no apologies here, nor should there be from Rep. Pettigrew or Rep. Santos. The buildings we funded aren’t bridges to nowhere or useless museums with our names on them, but almost entirely expanded capacity for much-needed social and health services in our district as well as similar organizations in nearby districts that serve folks from the 37th. Here are the numbers for the 37th district projects:

- CASA Latina: \$325,000
- Eritrean Community Center expansion: \$300,000
- Neighborhood Care Health Clinic: \$1,000,000
- El Centro de la Raza: \$250,000
- Rehabilitation of Historic Washington Hall: \$381,000
- King Street Station: \$750,000
- Katherine Green Daycare: \$30,000

Transit-Oriented Communities

“The days where we’re just building sprawl forever, those days are over. I think that everybody... recognizes... that’s not a smart way to design communities.” These words from President Obama struck a chord with me. Too often I hear stories of the janitor who must drive hours to get to her job or the waiter who has to switch three buses to get to work. They don’t choose these long commutes. They are forced to live great distances from their workplaces because they can’t afford housing closer to work. Working families are faced with the twin burdens of shrinking budgets and rising housing and transportation costs. If we are smart and deliberate, we can turn these crises into an opportunity to help working families deal with the high costs of housing and transportation.

In July, Sound Transit began light rail service in Seattle. It’s been a long and frustrating wait for residents in South Seattle, but this transportation investment will spur positive change in the community. That is why I co-sponsored the Senate version of the Transit Oriented Communities legislation (SB 5687 in the Senate, HB 1490 in the House) that will empower cities and communities to increase livability, provide more transit options and give families opportunities to save money. Neither bill passed this year, but both will be considered in 2010. I’m told by Ron Sims, our outgoing King County Executive and now Assistant Secretary of HUD, that the Obama administration is pursuing this same policy aggressively at the federal level. Ron’s first meeting with Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officials from other departments was on this very issue: how to use federal funds to encourage compact development around transit. These bills were also among the four “priority” bills sought by the coalition of 23 environmental groups that coordinate their lobbying.

This legislation aims to create affordable, walkable communities around light rail stations in Seattle, Tacoma, Everett and 18 other cities in the Puget Sound region. The bill requires, first, that cities plan for density within a half-mile radius of a station, and second, that cities include affordable housing in new developments for working families and those earning less than the county median income.

There is no question that Western Washington is growing. Over the next 30 years, 1,600,000 more people are expected to move to the Puget Sound region (from just south of Tacoma to just north of Everett). To temper sprawl and the traffic jams, smog and public costs associated

with growth, we must prepare our cities to accommodate new residents and new jobs. That means creating denser, urban, non-automobile-dependent communities to take full advantage of existing and future transit. The increased tax base that new residents provide will help pay for maintenance and upgrades to our infrastructure.

The bill originally included a provision that areas within a half-mile of a transit stop would have an allowable density of fifty dwelling units per acre. This density is common in East Coast cities, but seems jarring in Seattle. The bill didn’t outright specify that such neighborhoods had to upzone to fifty dwelling units per acre, but if a developer were to request a Transit Oriented Development plan, cities would have to comply with this new density level. This sparked a heated debate in the district. Because of concerns that density levels should be set locally, we removed the fifty units/acre level for station areas that are not designated by the Puget Sound Regional Council as regional growth areas. (None of South Seattle’s four stations are so designated.) Striking this section resolves the concerns expressed by the opponents who said the bill would increase development too drastically. Continued densification will occur in these neighborhoods with or without this legislation. City planners say we can expect 60 units per acre in 10 or 15 years.

Just as importantly, without the low-income housing this bill provides, gentrification – the involuntary displacement of low-income people who have lived here for several generations – will occur unchecked. There are currently few protections to ensure enough housing for working families and even fewer that help families with relocation and rent assistance. Working people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for the basics like groceries and child care. That’s why the bills weren’t a priority of environmental groups alone, but were also supported by the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, advocates for tenants and for the creation of more low-income housing. Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, affordable home.

This legislation gives neighborhoods the tools to choose their own way to meet housing goals, using an appropriate mix of single-family, low-rise and mid-rise structures in a way that meets the community’s character and values. It provides a framework for smart growth, not for high-rises. Our state has a long history of local control. This does not change that.

Other critics opposed the provision for housing that would be affordable to low-wage workers and their families. I support it strongly. We have a choice before us – do we let this in-migration negatively impact our communities by displacing families who can't afford to live here anymore? Or, do we transform our communities into walkable, transit-rich, livable neighborhoods where families of all incomes have the opportunity to live, work and thrive? Will Seattle allow gentrification to force out many long-time residents in order to welcome the better-off from elsewhere?

Folks also brought up concerns about this legislation increasing our state's and city's right of eminent domain, the legal right to condemn land. In fact, residents of Washington have our nation's strongest constitutional protections against the use of eminent domain, especially where the land is to be transferred to a private owner. This bill doesn't weaken that protection at all. Still, conservative "property-rights" advocates, angrily opposed to land-use planning – and government in general – have instilled in the public a fear of local governments running amok, condemning property for the hell of it, and passing it off to their developer buddies. I have a well-founded faith that South Seattleites will see right through that one.

South Seattle has made tremendous progress to create communities that give people transportation choices and affordable housing options while protecting diversity and character. It's one reason I'm so proud to call it home. I hope we can continue our leadership, welcome our new federal allies to the process, and together create walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods that families of all incomes can call home. With Transit Oriented Communities, I believe we can. I intend to continue my support for the Senate bill next session.

General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U)

For decades, DSHS has administered a program best described as the sagging bottom of the social safety net. General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) provides minimal financial and medical assistance to adults who are unable to work due to disability, but ineligible for other programs our state offers like unemployment insurance, worker compensation benefits, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. GA-U provides a stipend of \$339/month and medical benefits for

low-income adults ages 18 to 64 if they have no dependents and are expected to be unemployable for more than 90 days because they are physically or mentally incapacitated. The program is intended as a temporary "bridge" for applicants to the federal SSI program, which takes a year or more to access. Statewide GA-U enrollment averages around 16,000 people; of these, 5,593 live in King County – that's about 32% of the total number statewide – and of those, almost half live in Southeast Seattle.

About a quarter of GA-U recipients are homeless, most of the remainder have only marginal housing such as "flophouse" hotels, and many suffer from alcoholism in addition to their primary incapacity and/or untreated mental illnesses, so it was feared that a reduction in benefits or medical care would force many more of these marginally surviving folks on the street. Still, the GA-U program helps keep thousands more people from becoming homeless, and provides them with vouchers for the medical services they need. As it is, with no reduction in GA-U, the state's homeless population is expected to grow by 20,000 in the next 12 months. Clearly, maintaining this program was important to preventing an even greater upsurge in homelessness. I was not filled with joy when the Governor, in her initial budget proposal, zeroed-out GA-U entirely.

Yes, we made cuts. Cash grants were reduced by \$18.6 million and medical aid was reduced by \$37 million. However, according to a Legal Services lawyer who represents recipients, structural changes made along with these reductions will result in *improvements* in the program. Yes, this is counterintuitive, and yes, this appears on the surface to validate the conservative argument that there were efficiencies that could have been made decades earlier. (Conservatives had never suggested them, but hey, let's be post-partisan.)

Now, DSHS will focus on moving recipients onto the federal rolls more quickly – better for the individuals because the SSI benefits are higher and come with Medicaid, and better for the state because SSI is entirely federally funded. The new regime will pay closer attention to those who receive benefits for more than 12 months to determine if SSI is the appropriate goal or if state-funded vocational rehab or other services might better move the individual back to employment, which can only improve the life of the recipient. Similarly, for the many vets in the program, closer connections to the Department of Veterans Affairs will mean more appropriate, federally funded assistance.

Further, a move to centrally-administered managed care will give recipients a medical "home" – a clinic that wants to serve them and that must serve them. Managed care should keep the cost of coverage down, but more important it should improve health outcomes for this medically complex population. A medical home should also improve the quality of initial SSI applications and move people onto the federal rolls more quickly. But most importantly, the addition of mental health coverage makes sense, given that 40% of the population qualifies. My friend the lawyer calls the new GA-U an improvement. Who'd have thunk?

Criminal Sentencing

Okay, this one was mine, and I'm happy. As seems to be the nature of tough bills, it took a while – four years. (And my lot in life seems to be to push tough bills up the mountain.) SB 6167 significantly raises the dollar-values that distinguish between three degrees of theft, bad-check crimes, and about six other property crimes. Each of our property crimes has three degrees: Third (a gross misdemeanor), Second (a Class C felony) and First (a Class B felony). Since 1975, a property crime involving a value of up to \$250 was a gross misdemeanor, between \$250 and \$1,500 a Class C felony, and over \$1,500 a Class B felony. Misdemeanors can get you free room and board for up to a year, Class C felony for up to five, and Class B up to ten. Now think about it: prison time costs the taxpayers \$31,037 per year for the average prisoner. Still, for many years the "lock-'em-up" strategy that so enthralled my colleagues made it impossible for them to see incarceration as "government spending" that could be rationed out more wisely, like social services. Making the punishment fit the crime is a lot easier politically when the sentence increases. But they came around.

SB 6167 re-sets the Class C felony amount from \$250 to \$750, and the Class B amount from \$1,500 to \$5,000. Prosecutors are given enhanced ability to "aggregate" several smaller thefts in a single felony charge and will exercise this authority primarily in cases of organized retail theft. The bill, signed last month by Governor Gregoire, is expected to shift over 4,000 felony cases from Superior Court to District and Municipal Courts, where they will be prosecuted as misdemeanors with lower sentences, as befits lower levels of crime. The savings to our state Corrections is in the multiple millions, and overbur-

dened Superior Court judges are freed for the more serious violent offenses.

Surprisingly, another financially prudent bill was sponsored by a very conservative Republican. SB 5525 allows Corrections to extend housing assistance to returning ex-felons in the community, rather than keep them in custody much more expensively while they arrange post-release programs; the Governor signed it last month.

Several other criminal law bills – even some with equal potential savings – didn't fare so well. SB 5292, my bill to curtail the "Three Strikes" law by removing Robbery Second Degree from the list of "strike" offenses, was passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, but met its usual fate soon after. It would have saved \$661,000 in lower incarceration in the 2011-13 biennium, and \$834,000 the following two years. Sen. Kohl-Welles' marijuana-reclassification bill, SB 5615, was also passed by the Committee – a "first" that was accomplished with the help of a Republican member, at my request, in lieu of a recalcitrant Democrat. The legislation would reclassify the possession of forty grams or less of marijuana from a misdemeanor to a civil infraction with a

monetary penalty of \$100. People under 18 years of age would still be guilty of a misdemeanor. It would have saved close to \$1 million within the first two years. We'll try again next year.

Ex-Felons Voting

Other than bills involving abortion, guns, gays and God, nothing quite stirs the political hormones than the prospect of felons being allowed to vote. Conservatives, having apparently convinced themselves that felons are natural Democrats, have objected loudly in every state in which this has been tried, and Washington was no exception. We passed it, the Governor signed it, and I'm happy to tell you about it.

Once a felony offender has done his or her time and then gone through the one-year period of community supervision, all that remains is for him or her to pay the fines, penalties and sometimes victim-restitution, that are collectively known as "legal-financial obligations." But because these are debts that often start in the thousands of dollars, and gain interest while the offender is in prison, it often happens that felons—not the first folks to

be offered a job – can't pay them. Under the old regime, that was an impediment to receiving the certificate of discharge that would have allowed the ex-offender to apply to a judge to having his or her voting rights restored. That and having to get a lawyer to do it. Does that sound like a poll-tax to you? It certainly acted like one.

To remedy this, we passed HB 1517, which restores the right to vote, immediately but provisionally, when the ex-offender is discharged from the one-year post-prison supervisory period. Should the offender fall behind by three monthly payments in a year on the financial obligations, the court clerk (or the victim, if it's restitution) may ask the prosecutor to move in court to have the offender stricken again from the voting rolls. For the offender, a showing of good-faith effort is needed to stay on or get back on the rolls.

This strikes a fair balance between the offender's right to vote and the right of the victim to receive restitution. What's odd about this bill was the vote: party line in both houses, a bare 53-43 in the House and then 29-19 in the Senate. We Seattle liberals like to think that bills like this (and like marijuana decriminalization and identity-checks at gun shows) are dictated by simple "common sense" and ought to have been adopted unanimously decades ago, and we are sometimes surprised when the rest of the state disagrees. In my opinion, same-sex marriage and an income tax are "common sense," too, but common sense doesn't cast a vote in the Legislature. Still, we won this one.

Other Environmental Bills: Energy Efficiency, Clean Water, Renewables

Several environmental bills passed this year, but we missed a number of opportunities to advance a truly green agenda. I usually resist the Democrat-bashing that comes from folks who fail to appreciate the diversity among Democrats, many of whom represent rural or suburban voters. Progressives are often criticized for having failed to attain the impossible. But this time there is some credibility to it: our environmental record was less than we actually *could* have accomplished. To set it in context, the coalition of 23 environmental groups, which coordinates a joint lobbying campaign, had four "priority" bills, including The Transit-Oriented Communities bill discussed earlier in this newsletter. We passed only one of the four Eh.

My Bills Passed This Year

The following are my twelve contributions to the laws passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor this year:

SB 5135 adds five new Judge positions to King County District Court over three years.

SB 5147 repeals laws on criminal libel, which I believe were unconstitutional in limiting free speech.

SB 5151 adds new Court Commissioners to the Superior Courts of larger counties, to assist in handling litigation.

SB 5153 sets standards by which Washington courts will recognize judgments of courts of other nations.

SB 5160 extends the time to appeal a property-forfeiture in drug prosecutions.

SB 5171 clarifies the rules that govern tax payments from trusts, avoiding under-reporting.

SB 5262 allows police officers to verify driver's identity from roadside, by computer access to D.O.L. license photo.

SB 5561 requires Carbon Monoxide alarms in new residential construction by 1/1/2011, and all existing residences by 1/1/2013.

SB 5732 requires District and Municipal Courts to divert Driving While License Suspended offenders to payment plans and re-licensing.

SB 5873 expands use of apprenticeships in public construction contracting.

SB 6167 raises the dollar-figures that define the three degrees of property crimes, and decreases felony prosecutions.

SR 8609 (a Senate Resolution) honors the Mt. Baker Community Club's annual MLK Scholarships for minority youth.

That priority bill, though, was a dandy: SB 5854 addressed energy-efficiency of buildings in the public and private sector. It requires the adoption of building codes that move towards a 70% reduction in energy use by 2031 and requires the appropriate agencies to develop and implement plans to fulfill that goal. It puts in place a system to make significant advances in a relatively tight time-frame, beginning this year. For example, the bill mandates that the state adopt the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's "Energy Star" rating system for buildings. If any publicly-owned building has an energy-efficiency rating of 50 (the median) or less, the agency must conduct an audit. If significant conservation measures are identified, the agency must implement them by July 1, 2016. State agencies may not lease a building with an audit rating of less than 75, unless there is no feasible alternative.

The upshot of all these requirements is that energy-efficiency will become a factor in a building's value, will attract a higher sale price or rental value, and will thereby be encouraged. Government will lead by example in improving the efficiency of its own properties and the properties it leases before any further regulation of the private sector.

Another environmental priority bill, SB 5518, involved clean water and the heavy burden that falls on local governments to build stormwater runoff that meets federal and state requirements for treatment before the water is returned to the environment. Given that local governments have been reduced to poverty conditions by a combination of mindless tax-cutting initiatives (Thanks, Tim) and an economic meltdown, we need to finance this much-

needed infrastructure. The sources chosen by this bill are the sources that should have been tapped long ago because they created the problem: the petroleum industry and ourselves as motorists. Were it not for grease deposit on highways and the arsenic, hydrocarbons, and zinc that washes out of asphalt as it degrades, stormwater would be a relatively minor issue.

This bill, when we finally pass it, will impose a \$1.50 per-barrel fee at the refinery on those petroleum products that contribute to stormwater pollution: gasoline, diesel, lubricants, industrial fuels, and products used in making asphalt. Exempted (because they don't contribute to highway grease deposits, or because the right corporations protested) are home heating oil, diesel used on farms and aviation fuels.

At 42 gallons per barrel, that's 3.6 cents per gallon that may be expected to be passed on to consumers. The proceeds will fund grants to local governments; the locals will be required to match the grants with their own funds. The anticipated revenues that would have been available for these grants: \$190 million in the 2009-11 biennium, \$255 million in 2011-13, and \$262 million in 2013-15. That's about half the amount that local governments are expected to spend on this infrastructure in those biennia. We ought to be able to do this next session.

Worse than our low batting average on offense was the effort by some Democrats to join with Republicans in attempting to gut the environmentalists' recent major victory, I-937. That initiative required power utilities to maintain at least 15% of their power generation from renewable sources: solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, or tidal – a list that specifically did not

include hydro-power because we already have it in such abundance. The point was to create an incentive for new sources. SB 5840, a bill to include hydro to the list of qualifying renewables, passed the Senate with some Democratic support (I was a No), but luckily died on the last day, when the House failed to complete its business by midnight. Hydro already supplies 30% of our state's power; this would have in effect nullified a voter-passed initiative.

My own contribution to the environmental agenda was SB 5149, which would have created a geothermal energy assessment process, putting geologists' boots on the ground in areas of the state thought to have potential for geothermal energy. Two areas of the Cascades are believed to have this potential in commercial quantity and possibly in areas not far from existing high-capacity transmission lines of the electrical grid. The bill in its original form would have had a comprehensive analysis done by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with help from the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, the State Geologist, and the Utilities and Transportation Commission

The bill turned out to be wholly unnecessary. Just after it passed from committee, the Obama administration announced the \$787 billion federal stimulus package, which contained funds that would go directly to consortia of utilities as matching funds for, among many other green purposes, exploration and development of geothermal energy. There are lots of reasons for a legislator to abandon work on a promising bill, most of them unpleasant, but the most pleasant of all is to have its mission accomplished.

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