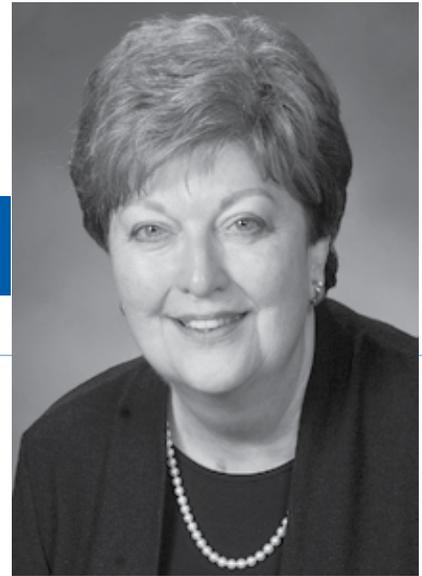


Washington State Senator • 38th Legislative District
Senator Jean Berkey

2009 Legislative Newsletter



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Senator Jean Berkey

represents the 38th legislative district, which covers Everett and the Marysville area. She is chair of the Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance Committee and is a member of the Transportation Committee.

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2009 legislative session was one of the most difficult sessions in recent memory. The state's unprecedented financial crisis, brought on by the national recession, forced us to make significant budget cuts. While it is my sincere hope that the economy will turn around soon, state revenue forecasters don't expect that to happen in the short term.

On a positive note, we took steps to change the state's outdated K-12 education funding formula so all students have access to a top quality education; made investments to help small businesses grow; and extended unemployment benefits to help struggling families.

This newsletter is an update on what was accomplished during this challenging session.

It is an honor to be your voice in the Senate, and I hope you will continue to contact me on matters that are important to you. As always, I welcome your thoughts and questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean".

Jean Berkey
State Senator
38th Legislative District

Tough Decisions

Confronted with record revenue shortfalls, our budget strategy was three-fold: identify and spare the people least able to withstand cuts in services and basic programs; avoid counterproductive cuts that might save money in the short term but lead to greater costs in the long term; and be as innovative as possible in finding ways to reduce spending that minimized cuts in services. The operating budget totals \$31.4 billion.

K-12 Education — K-12 public education expenditures were reduced in areas that are currently not considered basic education. The average per district cut is about 2.6 percent. Other budget areas have received cuts as high as 30 percent.

Higher Education — State colleges and universities are allowed to raise tuition 14 percent a year at four year schools and 7 percent at community colleges.

Human Services — Regretfully 40,000 people will be eliminated from the Basic Health Plan to save \$255 million. There will be no reductions to Medicare Part D premium support or to Adult Vision. And, neither the Meals on Wheels program nor the Personal Needs Allowance for seniors are impacted by the budget shortfall.

- General Assistance Unemployment (GA-U) is a state-funded program that helps people who are physically and/or mentally incapacitated and unemployable. The GA-U cash assistance program is reduced by \$18.6 million. GA-U medical is reduced by \$37 million.

Seniors — The Adult Day Health program will be limited to people who live in their own homes and transportation services are eliminated.

What we accomplished

Education

- A number of unfunded mandates involving reporting requirements and curriculum assessments were removed and others were put under a 2-year suspension. This will give districts more time to educate our students rather than meeting state requirements. **(SB 5889)**
- A new K-12 education funding formula was developed that meets the needs of students and schools. **(HB 2261)**

Health care

- Steps were taken to drive down health care costs over time by establishing uniform standards to be followed by all health plans. **(SB 5346)**
- Guidelines will be established so patients can access and control their health care information. **(SB 5501)**

Business and Jobs

- Tax exemptions and credits were extended to a variety of renewable energy products such as solar energy, biomass energy, tidal and wave energy, geothermal resources, and hog fuel (wood waste). **(SB 6170)**
- Penalties for first-time paperwork violations were waived for small businesses. **(SB 5042)**
- Legislation was passed promoting energy efficiencies in buildings to create green jobs. **(SB 5649)**

Family Security

- A separate fund for workforce training was established to get dislocated workers back to work in high-demand fields. **(SB 5809)**

- Unemployment insurance provisions were modified so that unemployment insurance benefits are charged back to employers in the same amount that benefits are paid out. **(SB 5963)**

Environment

- A weatherization effort was launched to make more homes and commercial buildings energy efficient. This program will provide local jobs for skilled workers, apprentices, veterans and disadvantaged populations. **(SB 5649)**
- Energy codes for new buildings were strengthened. **(SB 5854)**
- To encourage local clean energy production, the B&O tax rate for solar manufacturing was lowered and the renewable energy cost recovery program was extended to include community projects. **(SB 6170)**
- Large vessels such as oil tankers, cargo vessels and cruise ships will pay for the Neah Bay response tug — the first line of defense against catastrophic oil spills on Washington's coast or the Strait of Juan de Fuca. **(SB 5344)**



My bills

As chair of the Senate Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance Committee, I was pleased that many of my consumer protection bills passed the Legislature. To highlight:

Home Foreclosures

We established a program that will prevent and reduce foreclosures for



thousands of Washington middle income homeowners. Under my program, volunteer financial professionals from around the state will be recruited to help struggling families renegotiate their mortgage terms. Families and individuals with incomes at or below the county median income level will be eligible. I sponsored this bill because homeowners are under tremendous pressure, and they need help working through their options. (SB 6033)

Please visit my Web site for the latest information about the program and when it will officially start.

Flood Insurance

Insurers are required to provide homeowners and tenants with a clearly written notice that their homeowner policies do not cover damage caused by flooding. (SB 5417)

Small Loans

We placed restrictions on check cashers' and sellers' communications when collecting delinquent small loans. (SB 5164)

Annuities

We passed a bill requiring that annuities sold in Washington be suitable to the age and financial situation of the purchaser. Producers of annuities must have reasonable grounds to believe that the products they are selling are suitable for their clients. This bill will help protect our seniors. (SB 5671)



Sen. Jean Berkey pictured with Governor Gregoire and Senate Committee Services Counsel Diane Smith at Life Settlements Act bill signing April 16, 2009

Life settlements

I sponsored legislation to regulate life insurance death benefits sales transactions to protect our elderly citizens. My bill also creates licensing standards for the industry and bans life insurance sales to parties who have no interest in the survival of the insured. I want to ensure consumers are informed and understand what options are available to them when considering selling valuable life insurance policies. (SB 5195)

LOCAL ISSUES — WHAT'S OLYMPIA DOING FOR US?

The Legislature must make decisions as a group to serve the state as a whole, but it's also our duty to protect the interests of the constituents we represent. I was able to secure funding for a wide array of important projects in our community.

2009-2011 Capital budget projects	
Everett Community College	\$4.3 million
Artspace Everett Lofts	\$1.0 million
Visual Arts Education Center	\$1.0 million
Snohomish County Emergency Operations Center	\$1.0 million
Marysville Boys and Girls Club	\$500,000
Convert Key Bank to Everett's Plaza Theatre	\$500,000
Imagine Children's Museum	\$200,000
Legacy Project	\$200,000

LOCAL ISSUES- Continued

The state has committed to investing more than \$325 million into highway projects in our area. Some of the projects include:

2009-2011 Highway Projects	
I-5/Marysville to Stillaguamish River Vicinity - Median Barrier	\$24.0 million
SR 529/Ebey Slough Bridge - Replace Bridge	\$15.3 million
US 2/43rd Ave SE Vic to 50th Ave SE Vic - Bridge Rehabilitation	\$11.9 million
I-5/52nd Ave W to SR 526 - NB Paving Lynnwood, Everett	\$5.8 million
SR 9/84th St NE (Getchell Road) Improve Intersection	\$5.0 million
I-5 Northbound/Snohomish River to Ebey Slough - Paving	\$2.9 million
I-5, Marysville to Stillaguamish River- Message Signs, etc.	\$2.4 million
I-5/SR 526 to Marine View Drive - Add HOV Lanes	\$1.4 million
US 2/Route Development Plan	\$400,000