

Senator Val Stevens

39th Legislative District

Legislative Report • May 2009



Senator Val Stevens

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Committees:

- Higher Ed and Workforce Development
- Human Services and Corrections
- Natural Resources, Oceans and Recreation
- Rules

National Organizations: Member of the Board of Directors of the American Legislative Exchange Council, an organization whose mission is to advance the Jeffersonian principles of free markets, limited government, federalism and individual liberty among America's state legislators.

Dear Friends,

It's been a difficult year in Washington. So many citizens are out of work. Small businesses are barely keeping their doors open. And this recession seems to have no end in sight.

My goal was to balance our state budget without raising taxes, but the Democrat majority had other ideas. Instead of taking a scalpel to cut non-essential "favorite" programs so that vital programs could survive, they trimmed a little off all programs – regardless of how it affects our most vulnerable citizens.

Despite these problems, I was able to help Washington's seniors by passing a law that exempts sales and use tax for meals served in senior centers. That will encourage families to visit seniors often and help keep families close.

I was also able to help foster kids with some legislation that will give them more security. And I obtained a little more help for Highway 2 – although not nearly enough – and pass a bill to create a pilot project to contract-out much of Child Protective Services' work. That's almost as good as breaking up DSHS.

As promised, I honored my commitment to vote NO on any bill that would raise your taxes. I sincerely hope that our formerly healthy economy returns and we can work together on the many problems plaguing Washington.

As always, it's an honor and a joy to serve you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Val

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Find out what will affect your life next!

2009-11 STATE BUDGET – HOW TO KEEP SPENDING AND STILL ASK FOR MORE

The majority party has done an excellent job of scaring taxpayers about the “\$9 billion state budget deficit.” But one fact got lost in the rhetoric: *Washington expects to take in about the same amount of revenue in the next two years as it did the past two years.*

If we had simply frozen state spending at 2008 levels, and used the federal stimulus money on one-time projects, the deficit would have dropped to just over \$1 billion, which would have been much more manageable.

Unfortunately, this budget makes virtually no permanent cuts to existing government programs or policies. Aside from closing a few state facilities, all of the Democrats’ most treasured programs are still in place. They simply reduced each program’s budget and used one-time federal money to keep them afloat.

It didn’t have to be that way.

Senate Republicans offered a budget plan to get the state back on sound financial footing. It would have cut programs that were voted on last year but not funded. It would have protected services for the most vulnerable and used the federal stimulus money on one-time needs – not ongoing programs. Unfortunately the majority party took none of our suggestions. Their current budget changes *nothing*. It simply postpones another huge deficit until 2011.

So thanks to \$3 billion in one-time federal money, the majority party can once again spend more than the state takes in. And, once again, they’re hoping the economy will rebound and their overspending will be bailed out.

Since they purposely failed to fund many services taxpayers want, such as reduced class sizes for K-12 education and health care services for the poor, they’re hoping you’ll agree to more taxes to “buy back” those services. I hope you don’t fall for it.

For things to truly change, we must demand accountability and responsibility from our leaders.

MY PLAN TO FIX HIGHWAY 2

Last year I fought for – and won – an extra \$5 million to help fix U.S. Highway 2, bringing the total to \$14 million. This year I introduced a bill that would have completely fixed Highway 2, making it a four-lane road all the way from Snohomish to Stevens Pass and completing the Monroe by-pass.

My **Senate Bill 5037** would have taken \$3 of every license plate fee as a “Highway Safety Account” – first to fix Highway 2 and stop the carnage that has seen 50 deaths since 1999. Then it would have been used to complete the Monroe by-pass. The state currently owns 80 percent of the land needed for the by-pass. All we need is to purchase the remaining 20 percent and fund the construction.

With those projects finished, the Highway Safety Fund would be used to fix Washington’s *next* most dangerous highway, and so on – until our highways are among America’s safest.

Unfortunately, the chair of the Senate Transportation Committee refused to hear the bill. Instead, she is funding spurious projects like a noise mitigation study on I-5 and wildlife crossings on I-90.

I am more determined than ever to introduce this bill again next year. The governor visited Highway 2 and designated it a “Safety Corridor,” which means it gets top priority.

It’s time she made good on her promise.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE AMERICAN DREAM?

Many of us are alarmed by what we see happening in our country. Greedy banks and financial institutions, crooked politicians, and a society that has departed from the principles of our Founding Fathers are causing the American Dream to slip away.

James Quinn, an administrator at The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, summed up my concerns in a recent article:

Politicians have seized money from the vast majority of Americans who have lived within their means, used debt sparingly, worked hard to get ahead, and gave it to the most appalling failures in our society. They have shoveled billions to banks some of which have operated their businesses like gambling casinos. Then they rewarded automakers who regularly pay 30,000 workers not to work for a year.

Thomas Jefferson, warned us against central banks like the Federal Reserve:

“If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and the corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered.”

Today, the Federal Reserve does the only thing it knows how to do: manipulate the interest rate to force the Treasury to print more money. It has almost tripled its balance sheet to \$3 trillion. They have also loaned over \$2 trillion of your money – with no accountability to taxpayers.

As your state senator, I fear our nation’s unsecured debt, supported by worthless inflated dollars, will be difficult or impossible to repay.

The American Dream was once about honor, achieving a better life based on your intelligence, initiative, hard work and contribution to our society. It appears the moral aspect and integrity which built the American Dream is being undermined, and I grieve for our country.

THE STRUGGLE TO BREAK UP DSHS

As you know, I've long advocated breaking up the Department of Social and Health Services and making Children's Services into a separate agency reporting directly to the governor. DSHS is a bureaucratic giant where Washington's children routinely fall through the cracks in the Children's Administration often ending up traumatized, severely abused and even dead.

Where this attempt has failed, I believe Substitute Senate Bill 5943 will succeed. The measure allows the state to contract with outside services to operate the foster care system.

While the details are subject to decisions by the Performance Contracting Oversight Committee, it appears that 40 percent of foster care will be contracted out initially on a pilot basis.

This pilot will allow us to see what happens when we follow the rules and measure the results. Hopefully, the expected positive results will allow us to take it statewide.

I am especially encouraged that the governor has hired Susan Dreyfus, a former administrator of the Wisconsin Division of Children and Family Services, as the new head of the Department of Social and Health Services. During her tenure at DCFS she implemented a similar contracted-out program with very positive results.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE – WE MUST CONTINUE THE FIGHT TO STOP IT

The Washington Legislature has passed a law (SB-5688) that makes homosexual relationships equal to marriage in every respect – except in name.



In doing so, the majority party ignored the will of the people, who consistently say they don't want homosexual marriage.

At this point, all it will take is for homosexuals to sue the State for the right to be given a marriage license. If domestic partnership is equal to marriage, then the court must decide if that includes a marriage license and ceremony.

Same-sex marriage is only part of a decades-old hidden agenda homosexual activists have promoted for more than 35 years.

Few people remember that on Christmas Eve 1984, Governor Booth Gardner signed Executive Order 85-09 giving special protection to homosexuals within Washington state employment. This order bypassed the Legislature and the people entirely.

In 1986 we ran Initiative 490 in an attempt to overturn that Order. Unfortunately, for lack of signatures, it failed to make it to the ballot.

In 1993, before he died of AIDS, Representative Cal Anderson introduced House Bill 1443 to expand the Human Rights Commission giving homosexuals special protection from discrimination by all employers.

More than 450 people turned out to oppose the bill, yet it passed because Rep. Anderson had convinced legislators to ignore public reaction.

Over the years, this hidden agenda has caused us to lose the right to control the moral character of the people who teach our children...to decide what our schools teach about sex... to determine whether an applicant's moral character will affect his job performance.

With SB 5688 in place, "domestic partnership" is made equal to marriage in every practical way, thus overturning the Defense of Marriage Act.

Now the only thing that will save traditional marriage is a public initiative or referendum voted on by the people of Washington.

SEN. STEVENS HONORED BY HOMESCHOOLERS



A growing movement – More than 500 Washington homeschool families were honored by a Home Education Resolution April 9. Nationwide, the home school movement has grown from 850,000 in 1999 to between 2.5 and 4 million today.

WORKING FOR OUR FOSTER KIDS

Over the years, time and again, I've seen foster kids struggle.

The more often a child is moved from family to family, the more the child concludes that families are not forever and adults are not to be trusted.

This year I introduced two bills designed to help foster children get the care and stability they need.

My first bill, **Senate Bill 5510** requires strongly worded parental notifications, alerting both parents of a child placed in foster care that their child needs them to re-engage in their life as soon as possible – and that failing to re-engage could cost them their parental rights.

Currently, notices are sent to parents at the start of foster care, after six months and again after 15 months.



Too often parents ignore these notices for years. Then, when they get the notice their parental rights will be terminated, suddenly they decide they want their child back. By that time, the child is strongly bonded with the foster family and removing the child is extremely painful. We want parents to get serious about getting their child back *immedi-*

ately – not years down the road.

If a child must be returned to the foster care system when an attempt of reunification

with parents fails, **Senate Bill 5431** requires the Department of Social and Health Services return the child to the original foster family if at all possible, thus preserving the relationship that has already been established.

Together, these bills will help our foster kids feel more secure, with a home life that includes people who truly love and care for them.

See how the state spends your money at: www.fiscal.wa.gov

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