

Ken Jacobsen

2010 Legislative Report



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If you visit my above listed webpage, you can sign up to receive my e-newsletter along with email updates about legislation and issues affecting our district.

Committee Assignments:

- Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (Chair)
- Agriculture & Rural Economic Development
- Higher Education & Workforce Development
- Transportation

Spring 2010

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It isn't often the Legislature goes into special session. With our budget woes taking center stage, a difficult 60-day regular session proved to be too short to settle on how best to close our \$2.8 billion dollar deficit. My colleagues and I all have passionate opinions regarding the budget and its impact on people's lives. While some were supportive of another all-cuts budget as we did just last year, I was strongly opposed to the idea of additional cuts to an already strained safety net in a still weak economy. I pushed for additional revenue.

Without additional revenue, critical services for many of our citizens who are already on the brink would cease. A mix of new revenue and cuts was proposed to close the budget gap. After much debate, House and Senate legislators agreed to raise \$800 million in new revenue.

Like many families, the state is facing financial challenges unlike any we have seen since the Great Depression. However, the budget does preserve/restore funding for all day kindergarten, state need grants for higher education, environmental protection programs, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), the Basic Health program, community clinics, alcohol and substance abuse services, foster care payments and senior citizens programs. We are also protecting the Working Connections Child Care program that helps struggling families afford child care as they get back on their feet and into the workplace, and we again restored funding to the home visiting program that assists new parents and their infants.

Unfortunately, cuts were made to higher education and natural resource agencies, as well as to funding that provides for smaller elementary school class sizes. Additionally, state employees will face mandatory, unpaid furloughs and increased healthcare premiums for the next two years. Layoffs are imminent for many.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you. It continues to be my greatest honor, and I am certain that together we will get through this difficult time. I believe fiscal reform is needed to reduce income inequality, stabilize our tax system and make quality investments in our future. As our population has grown, state spending and revenue per capita, measured by personal income, has actually declined over the past decade. I know our hard-working communities deserve better.

I invite you to read on to find out more about this legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Jacobsen".

Senator Ken Jacobsen
46th Legislative District

TOWN HALL MEETING

Come out to the 46th District Town Hall meeting.
Saturday, May 22nd – 10:30 AM to Noon.
Meadowbrook Community Center.

BUDGET

Generating New Revenue



The downturn in the economy has been unprecedented, affecting us all, and the state's coffers as well. The current economic climate has left us to contemplate increases in revenue. In the 2009 legislative session we passed an all-cuts budget. I voted against it because I felt the cuts would hurt our economy and stifle

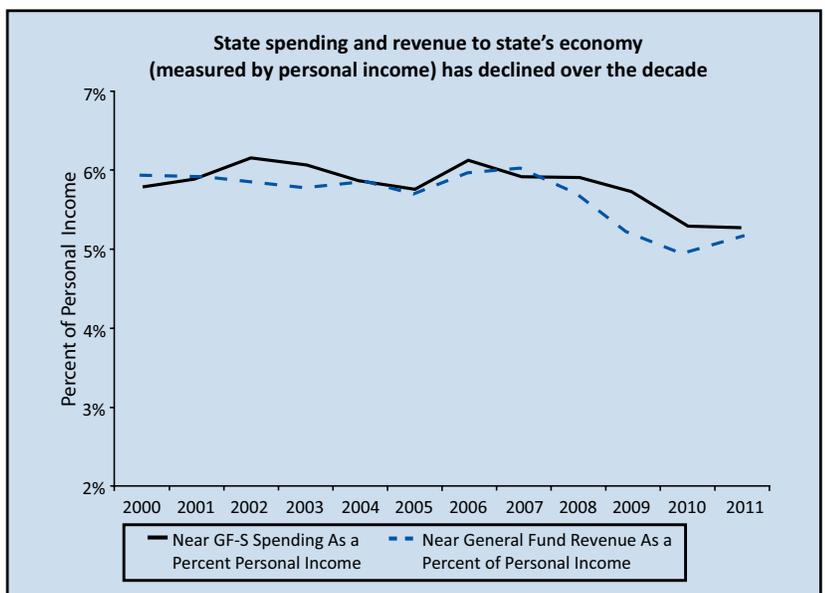
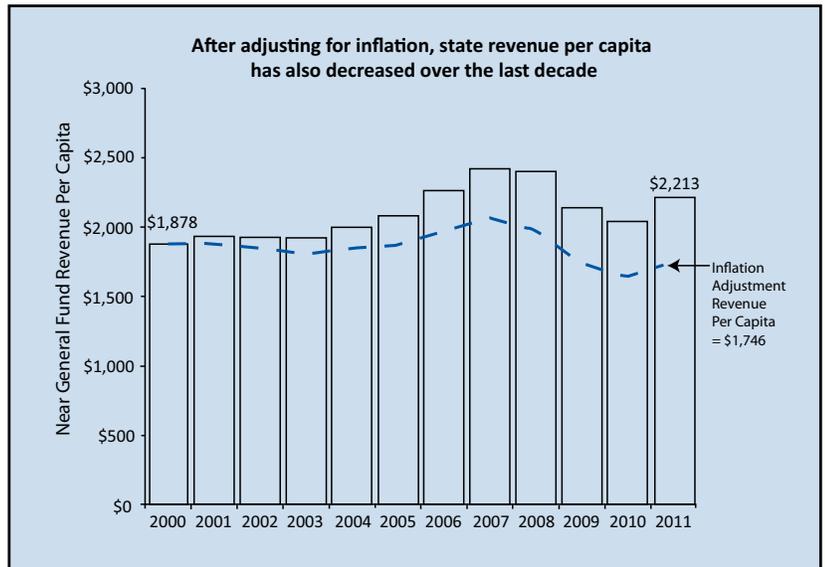
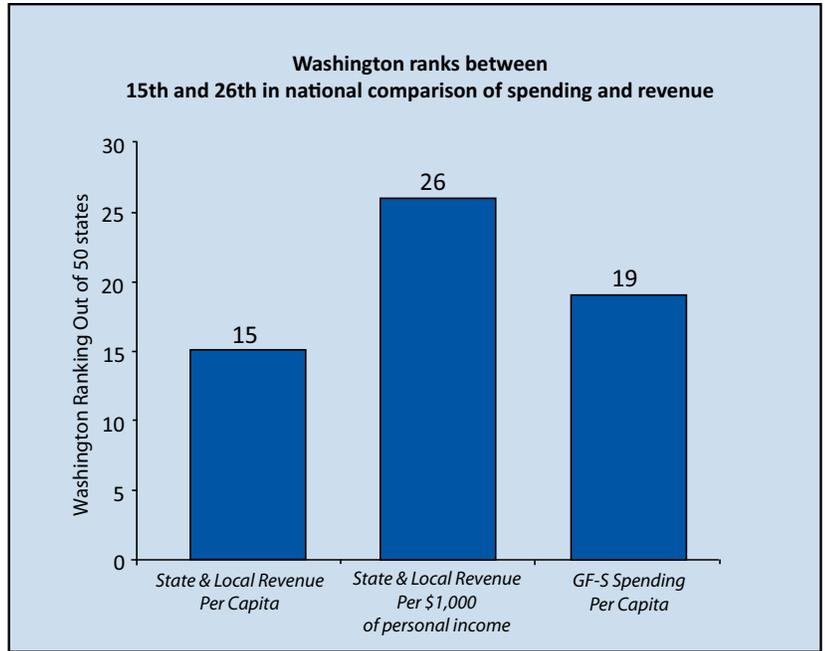
recovery. Last October, the revenue forecast continued to report diminishing revenues. With core services in serious jeopardy, I heard from many of you expressing your support for increased revenue. I strongly agree and advocated for legislation to generate funds now.

As a long-time proponent of a progressive tax system, including an income tax, it's my position that a more sustainable tax structure would help us weather economic downturns. The special session ended with a difficult compromise; increase the tax on candy, soda, cigarettes and beer, instead of an increase of the general sales tax.

Candy has never before been taxed in our state, but obesity-related health issues have driven up our healthcare costs and the recession has more people accessing our community health care centers as they have lost their health insurance.

The tax on beer was not my initial goal. However, faced with another round of devastating cuts that would cost us more in future expenditures, I opted for the increase. To prevent smaller brewers from being hit hard and possibly having to cut jobs, production of 60,000 barrels or less is exempted from the new tax.

To preserve and encourage jobs, candy manufacturers will be eligible for a \$1000 tax credit per employee.



EDUCATION

In February, a King County judge ruled that the state was not filling its responsibility to fully fund basic education.

Last year, the Legislature fundamentally changed our K-12 funding structure for the first time since 1977. As is no surprise, in the decades since, the expectations on our schools and our students have grown tenfold. In the last biennium, I successfully championed \$2.4 million for Seattle schools and this year House Bill 2261 increased the state's constitutionally protected financial obligation to K-12 education. The bill commits to fund programs for highly capable learners, providing mandatory transportation to and from school and addressing the way that we pay our teachers. I voted against this legislation, not because I am against education reform, but because we failed to stand up for kids and substantially fund the effort. Washington state is now ranked 43rd in the nation in K-12 per pupil spending. Delayed promises do not help our kids — we must do something to address this now.

That said, I did support this year's efforts to make our state more competitive in applying for the federal "Race to the Top" grant program. That measure, SB 6696, will benefit all schools by increasing accountability and flexibility and by reforming educator preparation and evaluation systems. The bill also implements a new system of support to help schools that continue to struggle and prepare Washington State for the second round application for Race to the Top funding.

K-12 Successes

- Increased flexibility and reduced unfunded mandates, allowing schools to make the best use of their funds.
- Created a new mandatory system of state authority to encourage accountability of low-performing schools.
- Strengthened instructional practices and provided additional opportunities for educators to enter the field.
- Strengthened teacher and principal evaluation systems.
- Continued our renewed focus on eliminating the achievement gap and making all students more competitive in our global society.
- Lifted the levy lid to increase equalization and give districts more flexibility.

Higher Education

I am a long-time proponent of affordable higher education. An educated workforce makes Washington State attractive to businesses. Affordability must be coupled with quality. For over 20 years, I have supported a higher tuition/higher financial aid model. We must increase financial aid

to middle and lower income students. As it is, the state subsidizes every college student. That additional tuition money could then be used to improve higher education quality and access for all students.

Oftentimes, higher education is cut when the economy slows. It is in times like these that we must focus on developing a pool of qualified workers to grow our economy. Our students deserve better than a second rate education. This year, I introduced a bill to grant the University of Washington's Board of Regents full authority to set tuition rates. My bill did not pass. However, for the first time, a similar measure — this one granting authority to University of Washington, Washington State University, and Western Washington University — was approved by the Senate. Unfortunately, it died in the House. Still, this was a landmark bipartisan step forward, one that I hope has generated momentum that will carry over to next session and lead to a bill signed by the Governor.

LEVERAGING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

As Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, I believe one of our most valuable resources is our vast amount of forest lands. Preserving forest lands and protecting our ecosystem isn't a Democratic or Republican cause, it's a human necessity. At the same time, forest products represent the second largest manufacturing enterprise in Washington — a \$17 billion a year industry that generates 45,000 direct jobs and 10,000 indirect jobs, many in rural locations. The jobs and revenue generated by these lands are vital to our state economy, but at the same time we must do everything we can to sustain our forest land base into the future.

The Forestry Conservation Incentives bill addresses this delicate balance. The bipartisan legislation will help forest land owners and the forest products industry maintain the vibrant ecosystems we all benefit from. This bill will ensure that everyone who has a stake in our forests also has a voice when it comes to their welfare.

This legislation also requires the Department of Natural Resources to report on conservation incentives that protect, restore and maintain the ecological values I believe most of us share — including clean water, renewable energy, carbon storage and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

The DNR report will bring all stakeholders to the table — the Forest Practices Board, tribes, small forest landowners, conservation groups and industrial foresters as well as state, federal and local governments. These proposals will be presented to the governor and Legislature at the end of next year.

SWEDEN WEEK 2010 AND THE RAOUL WALLENBERG DINNER

Scheduled for May 3-9, 2010, Sweden Week is a local showcase of great food, entertainment and a platform for trade and economic development between our city and the nation of Sweden. Swedish-Americans have made significant contributions to Washington State's history, culture, business, and education. Numerous community events by the Swedish Consulate in Seattle, Swedish Embassy, and the Swedish Cultural Center are planned. I sponsored a Senate resolution honoring Sweden Week during this recently concluded legislative session.

Highlighting the week is the annual Raoul Wallenberg dinner sponsored by the Nordic Heritage Museum in conjunction with the Washington State Holocaust Education

Resource Center. During World War II, Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg was credited with saving thousands of Jews by issuing Swedish passports and housing many in buildings in Budapest – which he declared to be extraterritorial and therefore diplomatically immune. I founded the Wallenberg dinner 16 years ago and this year I have been chosen to serve as Honorary Chair. It is an honor to be recognized in this manner. The Princess of Sweden, Her Royal Highness Princess Madeline is also scheduled to attend. More information about the dinner can be found on the Nordic Heritage Museum's website at: www.nordicmuseum.org

PROMOTING LOCALLY GROWN AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Last summer and fall I worked with other Seattle legislators and the Farmers Market Association on legislation to promote and support farmers markets. Several recommendations came out of our discussions. The Legislature unanimously passed a bill to create a very minor property tax exemption for property owned by a nonprofit for the purpose of a farmers market. This exemption will provide some relief for these markets, many of which operate on shoestring budgets.

I am pleased to report that my efforts to begin a Food Policy Forum were approved by the Legislature, but will be implemented by the Governor through an Executive Order. The new forum aims to:

- To develop programs promoting the production of healthy food grown in our state for people in our state.
- To protect resources needed for sustained local food production.
- To reduce food insecurity and hunger in Washington.

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