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FEBRUARY 15, 2013

My first two weeks in the Washington State Senate

Thank you for reading my e-newsletter! I'll be sending out new editions weekly as the 2013 legislative session progresses. Please feel free to forward this to any of your friends who might want to receive it as well. The more participation we can generate, the better representation you will have in state government.

As many of you know, [I took the oath of office](#) on Monday, February 4, in the Senate chamber. Washington State Supreme Court Justice James Johnson administered the oath as my husband and youngest daughter stood by my side. Afterward, I delivered a short speech where **I affirmed my desire to educate some of my western Washington colleagues about ways the Tri-Cities have succeeded** in the hope that what we've done can serve as a statewide model.



I now serve on the Senate [Agriculture, Water and Rural Economic Development Committee](#), the [Energy, Environment and Telecommunications Committee](#), the [Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee](#), and the [Transportation Committee](#).

Prior to February 4, I served as Kennewick mayor pro tem until I was appointed to fill the 8th Legislative District Senate seat vacated by former Sen. Jerome Delvin, R-Richland. His leadership and dedication to the people of the 8th District has been exemplary and I intend to continue the tradition of always being available to 8th District constituents. **My door will remain open and I look forward to speaking with everyone about the issues facing our great state.**

Since being sworn in, I have been very busy learning the ropes and helping to move my bill proposals through the legislative process. You can read more about my bills in the stories below, but if you have any comments, questions or concerns regarding these or any issues facing state government, **please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.** My contact information is at the bottom of this newsletter and I hope to hear from you soon!

Ending the "buy before need" energy requirement

One of my first priorities after becoming your 8th District state senator was to propose [Senate Bill 5648](#), which would allow utilities greater flexibility to meet conservation and eligible renewable targets and consumers' energy needs in the most prudent and cost-effective manner. It would encourage energy conservation and remove some of the burden electric consumers are currently facing.



Right now, electricity users and providers in Washington are suffering unintended economic hardship due to the provisions of Initiative 937 - passed in 2006 - which requires large utilities to obtain 15% of their electricity from new renewable resources such as solar and wind (but excludes the plentiful hydropower of Washington). **Everyone wants to conserve energy by using more of our renewable resources**, but what we didn't expect was that it would drive energy costs up and place additional, unnecessary burdens on electricity providers.

Our families need electricity and they need jobs so they can afford it. My bill would help provide both by loosening I-937's restrictions on utility companies and thereby allowing them to pass any cost savings onto their customers. By not forcing utilities to buy energy they don't need, we incentivize them to bring electricity rates down, putting more money in the pockets of both private citizens who light and heat their homes, as well as businesses that can turn around and use the cost savings to hire more workers. **It's a win-win for Washington.**

A tax exemption for disabled veterans

Another measure which I am passionate about is [Senate Bill 5072](#), proposed by Sen. Delvin before leaving office. This bill would provide a sales-tax exemption for disabled veterans and members of the armed forces who require adaptive equipment in order to safely operate their personal vehicles. This is for the equipment that allows a disabled veteran to drive, to get to work and to spend time with his or her family. **Not only is it the right thing to do for veterans, it's the right direction to go for the state of Washington.**



The state [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) offers a program which provides adaptive equipment to disabled veterans who need it to enter, exit and safely operate their vehicles, but because of the way the program is structured the VA can only pay the seller directly for the price of the equipment, not to the veteran or for the after-tax cost of the upgrades.

The equipment is therefore subject to sales and use tax which often leaves the disabled veteran on the hook for hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars in taxes.

During committee testimony, we learned that **Washington is only one of four states to tax adaptive equipment prescribed for the disabled**, and many disabled vets have had to do without adaptive devices due to the prohibitive cost of the tax. Fortunately the bill has already made it through the Senate Ways and Means Committee and is now in the Rules committee awaiting a vote by the full Senate.

Other bills I've proposed this session

I've proposed a number of other measures this year that I hope will be received favorably by the Senate and House of Representatives. You can click on the links to find out more information about each bill.

[SB 5679](#) - Improving the business climate and stimulating job creation by requiring certain agencies to establish a formal review process of existing rules. This bill would require the state Department of Ecology, the state Department of Labor and Industries and the state Department of Health to establish and annually perform a formal review process of their existing rules, as well as establish a process for effectively applying sunset provisions to rules when applicable. **Scheduled for public hearing Tuesday in the Senate Committee on Trade & Economic Development at 8:00 AM.**

[SB 5680](#) - Promoting economic development by providing information to businesses. This bill would increase the number of agencies required to participate in implementing the Business License Center Act. **Scheduled for public hearing Tuesday in the Senate Committee on Trade & Economic Development at 8:00 AM.**

[SB 5701](#) - Authorizing the suspension or revocation of certificates or permits to teach based on the fraudulent submission of tests for educators. This bill would allow the revocation or suspension of a teaching certificate or permit upon complaint from the professional educator standards board alleging unprofessional conduct in the form of a fraudulent submission of a test for educators. **Scheduled for public hearing Wednesday in the Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education at 1:30 PM.**

[SB 5705](#) - Concerning amounts received by taxing districts from property tax refunds and abatements. This bill addresses property tax refunds and abatements received by taxing districts. **Scheduled for public hearing Monday in the Senate Committee on Governmental Operations at 10:00 AM.**

[SB 5718](#) - Providing monitoring of the development of a one-stop portal for Washington businesses. This bill would - among other things - require the office of the state Chief Information Officer to provide the economic development committees of the Legislature with a plan for establishing performance benchmarks and measuring the results of implementing a one-stop integrated system for business interactions with government. **Scheduled for public hearing Tuesday in the Senate Committee on Trade & Economic Development at 8:00 AM.**

[SB 5765](#) - Promoting economic development through business and government streamlining projects. This bill would authorize a business regulatory efficiency program administered by the

state Department of Commerce with the goal of providing an improved regulatory environment in Washington. **Scheduled for public hearing Tuesday in the Senate Committee on Trade & Economic Development at 5:30 PM.**

In closing...

A big priority for me is getting your feedback as often as possible. It is one of the best tools I have to help me better represent you. I value your opinion highly and - as always - if you would like to contact me you can write, phone, e-mail, or stop by. It remains my honor to serve you in the Washington State Senate.

Sincerely,



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