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**FEBRUARY 24, 2013**

### Committee cutoff comes and goes

Friday was what's known as "committee cutoff" in the Washington State Legislature, and there were a lot of good bills that made it through to the next phase. Although policy committees are now finished, fiscal committees (like [Senate Ways and Means](#) and [Senate Transportation](#)) will continue to consider bills into next week. Once they reach their cutoff, the full Senate will begin debating bills in the chamber every day for nearly two weeks.



I'm pleased to say that seven of my nine bills passed out of policy committees before the cutoff deadline, and the two that didn't were what are called "companion" bills. That means there is an identical version of the bill that was introduced in the House of Representatives, effectively doubling the chances that the idea will move forward in the process.

You can find out more about what's been going on in the Washington State Legislature by [watching my video updates](#).



## Creating jobs and improving the business climate

My goals in the Senate have always been to help small businesses succeed, medium and large businesses thrive, and to get people working again. I'm proud to say that many of my bills that are moving forward are steps toward those goals.



[SB 5679](#) would help improve the state's business climate and stimulate job creation by requiring certain state agencies to establish a process for formally reviewing their rules. The bill originated from the state auditor's 2012 findings that three agencies' rules were not consistent with the review process set forth in Executive Order 06-02. My legislation would require the Department of Ecology, the Department of Labor and Industries and the Department of Health to annually perform a formal review of their rules and establish a process for effectively retiring rules when applicable.

[SB 5680](#) would promote economic development by reforming the state's Business Licensing Service, the state's primary business-licensing portal. BLS registers businesses, renews licenses and provides related services for approximately 40,000 businesses monthly, and has more than 115 state licenses available through its website. My bill, also inspired by the state auditor's 2012 report, would remove two agencies and add 16 to the list required to provide all their licenses online through the BLS website. Each agency would also provide an annual report to the state Department of Revenue.

In 2012 the state Office of the Chief Information Officer unveiled an action plan for creating a single online location through which businesses could conduct all their interactions with state government. [SB 5718](#) would require the Legislature to monitor the progress of that action plan and give the OCIO until November to provide the Legislature with a plan for establishing performance benchmarks and for measuring the results of implementing the one-stop business portal.

[SB 5765](#) would create a pilot business regulatory efficiency program administered by the Department of Commerce, the goal of which would be to improve the regulatory environment for businesses in Washington. Together with the Office of Regulatory Assistance and the Office of Accountability and Performance, the commerce department must conduct multi-jurisdictional regulatory streamlining projects that impact specific industry sectors, beginning with the state's manufacturing sector.

[SB 5705](#) would essentially treat abated taxes the same as refunded taxes so that funds received by a property taxing authority – raised for the purposes of filling the budget gap left by refunds or reimbursement for abated taxes – would not reduce the taxing district's levy authority, thereby aligning the law between tax refunds and tax abatements.

[SB 5701](#) would allow the state Professional Educator Standards Board to investigate and initiate action against teachers who submit fraudulent test scores. Because many teacher certifications are offered in a nonproctored setting, it is sometimes easy for people to cheat. My bill will reduce the chance that people will cheat.

## 'Don't buy before need' bill continues to gain support

The first bill I introduced as a state senator was [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 by helping to stabilize electric prices, increase conservation and create high-quality local jobs.



In the [Washington State Wire news blog](#), reporter Erik Smith describes my bill as follows:

***"Senate Bill 5468 takes aim at the stiff green-energy purchasing standards imposed by Initiative 937 in 2006 – expanding a long-running battle that until now has been waged mainly between green groups and Olympia insiders. The rules require the state's larger utilities to purchase steadily increasing amounts of windpower, whether or not they need the electricity. The result has been to trigger the development of a windpower industry, just as environmental groups and wind developers hoped seven years ago. But by forcing purchases at a time when electric demand is flat, I-937 threatens to send power rates skyward in 2016, when stiff new requirements kick in.***

***The so-called 'Don't Buy Before Need' measure, pushed by a campaign that started in the Tri-Cities, injects the first big new idea in ages into one of the Legislature's most arcane debates. It would relax purchasing requirements until utilities need power to satisfy new demand, and it would allow them to meet those targets with energy conservation. But maybe more important is the way the battle is being fought. A fight that has been waged mainly by the legions of suited-and-tied lobbyists at the state Capitol now embroils actual human beings – civilians who complain that higher power bills sock it to the people who can least afford it, ethnic minorities, the poor, and small business."***

SB 5648 passed the [Senate Energy, Environment and Telecommunications Committee](#) last week and is now in the [Senate Rules Committee](#) awaiting debate by the full Senate before being considered by the House of Representatives.

## 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,



**Sharon Brown**  
State Senator  
8th District

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