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**APRIL 23, 2013**

## Budget negotiations continue in earnest

In odd years, the Washington State Legislature meets for 105 days. In even years, we're only in session for 60 days. This Sunday marks the 105th day of the 2013 legislative session, and therefore it is the constitutionally-mandated final day of the "regular" session...and regular is in quotes because if the Senate and House can't agree upon a two-year proposed operating budget then we're in for a "special" session following the regular one.



As you know from the numerous instances in recent years, special session cost taxpayers money. They stretch out the length of time state government has to interfere with your lives and are generally regarded as bad news. Of course, special sessions could be avoided if only the House and Senate would begin the process of finding compromise a bit sooner, and with the true intent of finding a middle ground.

Unfortunately, though the Senate adopted a bipartisan budget proposal that would put more than a billion-and-a-half dollars more into education (about a billion of that going directly to meet the state Supreme Court-mandated McCleary obligation), reduce college tuition by three percent (something that's never happened in the history of Washington State) while increasing funding for colleges and universities, responsibly using the increase in revenue to boost funding for state programs across the board, institutes a number of government reforms that reduce the overall cost to taxpayers while streamlining services, AND includes no new taxes or tax increases...the House seems unwilling to seriously consider the measure.

In the meantime I'll continue to work across the aisle and across the rotunda, with the House of Representatives, to try to find a middle ground on which we can all stand. However with just under a week before the Legislature adjourns "Sine Die" (pronounced "SIGH-nee-DYE," Latin for "without a day" to reconvene), it may not be possible at this point to reach a budget agreement before the deadline.

Be sure to keep checking my website, [www.senatorsharonbrown.com](http://www.senatorsharonbrown.com), for updates on budget negotiations. If we should reach a breakthrough at the 11th hour, I'll send you an e-mail notification via a special *Bridges* e-newsletter update.

## Business bills to grow the economy and create jobs

Despite an uptick in state revenue and a slightly lowered unemployment rate, many of our friends and neighbors are still looking for employment and struggling to make ends meet. That's why it's vitally important that we do what we can at the state level to help businesses thrive, because a thriving business needs to hire more employees. That's how government should help to create jobs...not by simply materializing new taxpayer-funded state positions, but by reforming the way government interacts with private businesses to make it less of a burden to operate in Washington.



To that end, I've partnered with several of my colleagues, representatives from the state Department of Commerce and others to try and convince Governor Jay Inslee that we need to make changes to the way Washington handles business operations. It's no secret that our state is one of the most challenging in the country to create and build a successful business...in fact, we have one of the highest small business failure rates nationwide. That's why it's so important to all of our state's residents that government get out of the way of developing private businesses so that they can get back to doing what they do best...creating jobs and driving our economy.

Here are some of the business reform ideas we're seeking in Olympia:

- [SB 5680](#) (Sen. Brown) would create a single portal for business licensing and would direct the agencies to provide links to their particular permits, licenses and inspections on a single web portal so that a small business would be able to easily and completely comply with and obtain those licenses, permits, and inspections required for their particular business. **This bill was generated by the September 6, 2012, report from the State Auditor's Office, Regulatory Reform: Communicating Regulatory Information and Streamlining Business Rules.**
- [SB 5718](#) (Sen. Brown) would improve customer service to businesses by monitoring the business licensing portal. Designates one specific official (OCIO) to develop a plan and oversee implementation of a single portal for businesses to access the inspections, licenses and permits required by all state agencies.
- [SB 5158](#) (Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia) would provide a good faith defense for wage and hour complaints. Employers should be able to rely on formal written guidance given by L&I and not be subject to litigation if the information is inaccurate.
- [SB 5656](#) (Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia) would revise business licensing systems. All cities that impose a business and occupation tax must have their general business licenses issued and renewed, either through the state's Business Licensing System or a city managed system by July 1, 2016. Cities that do not impose a business and occupation tax must have their general business licenses issued and renewed, if renewal is applicable, through the state's business licensing system or city managed system by January 1, 2019.
- [SB 5688](#) (Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia) would commission a study to determine the impact of reducing the number of B&O-tax classifications to have one set of rules for employers.
- [SB 5697](#) (Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia) would reduce the frequency of local sales and use

tax changes. Currently local sales and use tax changes may be implemented four times per year: on the first days of January, April, July, and October. This bill allows such changes just twice annually, on the first day of January or July.

- [SB 5765](#) (Sen. Brown) 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 would conduct multi-jurisdictional regulatory streamlining projects that impact specific industry sectors, beginning with the state's manufacturing sector.
- [SB 5679](#) (Sen. Brown) would improve the business climate and stimulate job creation by requiring certain agencies to establish a formal review process of existing rules. Departments of Ecology, Health, and Labor & Industries must each annually perform a formal review process of existing rules with the goal of improving the processes for licensing, permitting, and inspection in a manner that reduces the regulatory burden on businesses without compromising public health and safety. **This bill was generated by the September 6, 2012, report from the State Auditor's Office, Regulatory Reform: Communicating Regulatory Information and Streamlining Business Rules.**

## Some of my proposals are set to become law

I've been fortunate enough to see some of my bill proposals make it through both the House and the Senate, and will now become law barring any potential veto by the governor during his ceremonial bill signing. Another proposal I support is going to pass in the form of a House bill that is identical to the Senate measure I proposed earlier this year. That's called a "companion bill."

[HB 1403](#) (the companion to my [SB 5680](#)) is inspired by a report from the state auditor's office in 2012. It would remove two agencies and add 16 to the list required to provide all their licenses online through the state's Business Licensing Service, the state's primary business-licensing portal. Each agency would also provide an annual report to the state Department of Revenue.

[SB 5701](#) also passed unanimously in the House and Senate. It would add the Professional Educator Standards Board to the list of organizations that may file complaints with the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and allow OSPI to issue a reprimand to educators as a penalty for submitting fraudulent test scores.



## Washington celebrates the Day of the Cowboy and Beef Day



On April 11, I had the pleasure of introducing a resolution to the Washington State Senate commemorating the National Day of the Cowboy! It just so happened to be "Beef Day" here at the Legislature, an unofficial holiday that unites the Washington Cattlemen's Association with the Washington Dairy Association and is a favorite among staff and members alike. People line up for blocks to get a taste of the tri-tip sandwiches prepared by the cattlemen slaving over hot barbecues, and washing it down with milk from the dairy folks.

It was my honor to speak in the Senate chamber about the cowboy and ranching traditions that have been part of the American landscape and culture since 1523, noting that today's cowboys and cowgirls continue to strive to preserve and perpetuate this unique element of America's heritage. In fact, I even got to interview a few cowboys and cowgirls myself...click the video below to watch and enjoy!



## 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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