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# King County Democrats

## Legislative Action Newsletter #7

March 16 - 21, 2009

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Tracking bills of interest to Democrats before the Washington State Legislature- Steve Zemke

Weekly Update on Issues and Bills - The March 12 deadline for bills to be reported out of one house or the other has passed . This report includes the status of those bills that made it and those that didn't. While a number of good bills will have to wait for the next session for action, a good number are also alive and kicking and need our attention. This attention includes not just keeping them moving, but avoiding bad amendments and trying to add good amendments. Please check bill status at www.leg.wa.gov as it can and does change on a daily basis. Also budget issues will now rise to the forefront with the projected \$8 million budget deficit.

Education

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[ESB 6809](#)- concerning the state's education system - on March 9 passed the Senate by a vote of 28/20. Now in House Education Appropriation Committee

[HB 2261](#) - concerning the state's education system (companion bill to ESB 6809)- on March 12 passed the House by a vote of 71/26.

Report from Kathleen Reynolds: The legislature made great progress on improving education for Washington's children this week! Both bills redefining basic education passed through their chamber of origin with bipartisan support. HB 2261 received a vote of 71-YAYS and 26-NAYS, and SB 6048 passed on a vote of 28-YAYS to 20-NAYS. The House bill included provisions such as increased high school graduation requirements, phased-in all-day kindergarten, the use of a prototypical schools model for school funding allocations and

the use of increases in state revenue for education. The Senate bill is less detailed but it also includes the prototypical school model and a phase-in of improvements as the funds become available. All stakeholders support the resulting bills and the objections of the WEA have been eased with the phase-in of the new system as the funding increases. Testimony on the bills was emotional: "The children in our school system are less educated than their parents," said Rep. Glenn Anderson, R-Fall City. "If not now, then when [will we improve the system]?" Rep. Ross Hunter, D-Medina, said the present school system is founded on a basic education law that makes little practical sense - a "meaningless set of formulas" that "drives us to make crazy decisions." Rep. Marcie Maxwell and Rep. Reuven Carlyle, both freshmen lawmakers, said education was why they ran for the legislature

Report from Sarajane Siegfriedt: The King County Democrats Legislative Action Committee spent an hour on March 15th listening to well-informed debate on K-12 education alternatives. We are tracking Sen. Eric Oemig's new intent-only bill, now in the House Education Appropriations Committee. (For more background on the education issues, read the Engrossed Bill Report: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/6048.E%20SBR%20APS%2009.pdf> ) Although we do not endorse all the elements of HB 2261, we appreciate the effort at compromise and are in agreement that substantially more funding is needed as the first step toward improving school performance. We endorse math teacher David Spring's estimate of \$4 billion needed for the biennium. We note that David Spring has presented his Fair School Funding Act to almost all members of the Democratic caucus. We request that this bill be considered given a hearing, as "necessary to the budget."

## **Criminal Justice**

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[S 5292](#) - concerning persistent offenders - died in Senate Rules. This was Adam Kline's bill to end life imprisonment for low seriousness crimes like Robbery 2.

[HB 1517](#) - changing requirements for the restoration of the right to vote for people convicted of felonies. Passed the House on March 12 on a vote of 53 to 43. Now in Senate Government Operations and Elections. Companion Senate Bill 5534 died in Rules.

Pay Day Lending - courtesy Dick Burkhart

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Update and Action on Predatory Lending - March 8

Identical bills have passed out of their House (SHB 1709) and Senate Committees (SSB 5920) Committees. These bills are weaker than what we need, but they are an improvement. Ask your Senator to support an amendment to the following effect:

"A borrower may not take out a new payday loan until all previous loans are paid off. These loans must include all loans from all lenders in the database. Failure to payoff a loan by the due date will automatically trigger the 90 day or 180 day payment plan, according to the size of the loan."

Background: Instead of including a 36% interest rate cap (the cap mandated for loans to US military personnel), the bill revisions provide for either a 90 day or 180 installment payback plan. Equal payments would be every 15 days, with no additional fees or interest and with full payback accepted at any time.

The 90 day plan is equivalent to an 87% interest rate for a loan less than \$400, while a 180

day plan yields a 45% interest rate for a \$400 to \$700 loan (the maximum possible). This still usury to my mind, but a lot better than 391%.

These payment plans could be requested if the borrower cannot pay back the full cost when it is due (on the payday), whereas now the borrower can only take out another loan to pay back the first one, then another 2 weeks later, etc., hence the 391%. The amendment suggested above would automatically trigger 90 or 180 day payment plan.

The amendment would also prevent the borrower from going to another payday lender to pay back the original loan. This is the role of the database, which is a new computer database that would be accessible to all payday lenders and the state, recording each payday loan as it is made and when it has been paid off. The idea is to limit payday loans to occasional special needs, to keep people from becoming enmeshed in a very costly cycle of loans.

## Health Care

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[SB 5945](#) - creating the Washington Health partnership plan - passed the Senate on March 9 by a vote of 28 to 19. A hearing is scheduled in the House Committee on Health Care and Wellness on March 20 at 1:30 PM.

[SB 5346](#) - concerning administrative procedures for payors and providers of health care services. Passed the Senate March 4 by a vote of 48 to 0. A Hearing is scheduled in the House Committee on Health and Wellness on March 19 at 8 AM.

[SB 5501](#) - concerning the secure exchange of health information, Passed the House on March 9 by a vote of 47 to 0. A Hearing is scheduled in the House Health Care and Wellness Committee on March 19 at 8 AM.

Environmental

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.SB 5687 and HB 1490 - the Transit Oriented Communities bills died in Rules Committee

.[SB 5518](#) and [HB 1614](#) - Invest in Clean Water Bills - from Margaret Shields we learn that although these bills did not get out of committee they are still alive

" The Invest in Clean Water environmental priority IS still alive for the session. I checked with WEC on this and got confirmation. Although the bills have not been passed out of either House, the measures are deemed necessary to implement the budget, so they can still be considered and are alive. 1614 is in House Rules and 5518 is in Senate Ways & Means. No action is expected on these bills until the very last week of the session when any big fee bills will be considered during the final budget decisions. "

[SB 5735](#) - the Cap and Invest bill passed as a substitute bill by a 29 to 19 vote. It is scheduled for a Public Hearing in the House Committee on Energy and Parks on March 17 at 10 AM. The bill is currently viewed as a very weak bill. The House version HB 1819 died in House Rules

[HB 1747](#) - Efficiency First passed the House on March 9 by a vote of 70 to 25. The bill is now before the Senate Environment, Water and Energy Committee. The Senate version of the bill [SB 5854](#) passed the Senate on March 10 by a vote of 42 to 5. A Hearing is set in the

House Committee on Technology and Energy and Communications for March 18 at 8 AM and continues on the 19th

2SHB 1165 - Secure Medicine Return Bill died in House Rules. The companion Senate Bill SB 5279 died in the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee

SHB 1469 - the Recycling Act for Mercury-Containing Lighting died in the Rules Committee. The Senate version of the bill SB 5543 never left the Se Committee on Environment and Water and Energy.

[ESSB 5840](#) - This bill amends I-937 - the Clean Energy Bill passed by Washington voters 2 years ago to increase renewable energy. A series of amendments significantly weakens the renewable energy mandate by lowering the requirement for new renewables by adding existing and new hydropower and other energy to the mix. The amendments were pushed by Avista Power in Spokane. If this bill passes we would be the first state to weaken the mandate for new renewable power. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 27 to 21. It is now in the House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee.

## Homeowner's Bill of Rights

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[SB 5895](#) - the Homeowner's Bill of Rights passed the Senate by a 25 to 24 vote. It has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Washington Public Campaigns

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HB 1738 - to provide public financing for Washington State Supreme Court races failed to be voted out of Committee. If we see a lot of money poured into this year's Washington State Supreme Court races this bill may move in the next session.

Read Craig Salins letter to the Tacoma News Tribune here. "[Election: Campaign Cash Shouldn't Call Shots.](#)"

## Election Reform

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[SB 5280](#) - modifying voter registration passed the Senate on March 3 by a vote of 32 to 16. While this bill adds provision to automatically update your voter registration when you move within a county that is good, it stops in person voting registration 8 days before the election and 29 days for on line registration. The bill needs to be amended to include same day registration through Election Day and automatic voter registration for all. This bill is scheduled for a Hearing in the House Committee on State Government and Tribal Affairs on March 19 at 8 AM.

Labor from Brad Larssen

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HB 1528 and SB 5446 both died in Rules Committee after being pulled by the Leadership after a questionable e-mail from Labor undid the normal legislative process. The State Patrol has dropped any investigation of the issue. Update from Brad Larssen - The Worker Privacy Act died without a vote despite a large Democratic majority in the House! This bill would have ensured that workers maintain their first amendment rights at the workplace on issues of individual conscience, such as religion, politics, charitable giving and union organizing.

We had 47 sponsors in the House and 21 in the Senate. That is only a couple of votes short of passage counting sponsors alone! We had commitments from many other legislators as well. We had the votes.

Not only Labor groups but Democrats from around the state have been calling for a floor vote on this bill. This bill should have passed weeks ago.

These calls were ignored. This bill has been continually held back from a vote while certain business lobbyists threatened and pressured aggressively and relentlessly.

In November we elected Democrats throughout the state and nation with the expectation that the people we elected would listen to us: Citizens, taxpayers and workers. Instead more attention was paid to the interests of those who financed and supported their opponents. These people's candidates lost the election by a wide margin. But they still exercise enormous control over state government, regardless of who we elect. This has to stop.

The reason given for killing this bill is an "improper e-mail." I have never heard this sort of excuse before ....and I've heard a lot of excuses. How is threatening to take your jobs and factories out of state and out of the country somehow acceptable behavior, while one e-mail out of 6000 deemed improper is enough to keep a bill with widespread and statewide support from even coming up for a vote? I don't buy it. We were disenfranchised on this one.

Despite winning the election by a wide margin, Washington workers will continue to enjoy many first amendment rights to free speech only after they retire.

Comment by Sarajane Siegfriedt regarding LAC's position on this issue - With regard to the Worker Privacy Act HB 1528/SB 5446, we reaffirm our support of this bill that is a top priority of Labor. We object to this bill being killed by the Governor and the legislative leadership on the basis of an internal email. We object to the legal investigation, when corporations can threaten to leave the state and without consequences.

[HB 1555](#) - addressing the recommendations of the joint legislative task force on the underground economy in the construction industry passed the House on March 5 by a vote of 95 to 1. It is scheduled for a Hearing in the Senate Committee on Labor and Commerce and Consumer Protection on March 17 at 1:30 PM.

[HB 1554](#) - authorizing the Department of Labor and Industries to issue stop work orders for violations of certain worker compensation provisions - passed the House on March 5 by a vote of 96 to 0. The bill is scheduled for a Hearing

[SB 5963](#) - regarding unemployment insurance passed the Senate on March 11 by a vote of 38 to 11. Scheduled for a hearing in the House Committee on Commerce and Labor March 18 at 1:30 PM.

passed the Senate without including any of the amendments requested by labor Gives significant permanent tax cuts to employers, but did not restore the multiplier for calculating benefits to the traditional level of 4.0.

## **Human Services from Sarajane Siegfriedt**

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The legislature failed to pass Senate bill 5672, which prevented discrimination based on

source of income (e.g. Sec. 8). We worked these bills up until the last possible moment. We got farther than we ever have on the source of income discrimination bill, one vote away in the Senate, which means that a number of Senators who were previously opposed to the bill were moved by all the hard work and advocacy we did together. In the end were told by the prime sponsor, Senator Adam Kline, that he intends to run, and pass, the bill next year. Please take a moment to say thank you to Senator Adam Kline, Senator Claudia Kauffman, Representative Timm Ormsby, and Representative Jamie Pedersen.

Both the Senate and the House Ways and Means Committees are due to issue their budgets to fill the \$8.5 billion gap, following an update Thursday 3/19 at noon. The Senate goes first this year, probably late this week. Now is the time to communicate to Ways and Means chairs and members. Our message: King County Democrats do not support cutting General Assistance-Unemployable (and Medicaid) for 22,000, substance abuse treatment and Basic Health supports to our most vulnerable citizens. Instead we believe any cuts should be matched 1:1 (at least) by revenue increases, such as closing tax loopholes and breaks to large corporations. We support seeking additional revenue sources and will work for their passage.

Please also send a message to Governor Gregoire that we are disappointed with her leadership on the issue of revenue increases. We are one of only two states (along with Louisiana!) where revenue increases are not on the table. Certainly circumstances have changed since her campaign. "An all-cuts budget doesn't cut it." Please ask the Governor to support revenue increases to cover education and the state's safety net. The Governor should let the voters decide.

Tracking Bills and Legislative Hearings:

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To check the status of any bill go to [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov). Here you can click on a link to track the status of any bill, get the text of a bill, learn the legislative history of a bill and where the bill is in the Legislative process and check on any scheduled hearings.

You can also find here links to send e-mails to your own legislators or any committee member or any other Legislator.

## **Contact Information**

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