



Session update from Olympia

January 31, 2012

Special session adjourns, tackles piece of budget shortfall



Pictured above: Senator Brown with Farmers Market Nutrition Advocates

Spokanites continue to make the trek to Olympia

Last week was another jam-packed week of informative meetings with constituents. Last Monday, I attended the annual Homesick for Spokane luncheon where I heard from organizations that serve some of our most vulnerable. Those organizations included The Salvation Army, Partners with Families and Children: Spokane, Volunteers of America, The Children's Alliance, and The Spokane Juvenile Court. Other meeting highlights included: local doctors with the Washington State Medical Association, Community Health Centers in Spokane, the Spokane District Dental Society and the Spokane Alliance.

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Senate Releases Jobs NOW Proposal

Pictured below: Supporters of the Sustainable Works program from Spokane advocating for the weatherization funding in the Jobs NOW proposal



Last week the Senate proposed our Jobs NOW package. The objective of the package is to:

- Take advantage of low construction prices by accelerating construction of essential public capital assets--do projects now rather than later, when they will be more expensive.
- Invest in projects and programs that will improve the shape of our recovery.
- Invest in projects that benefit future operating budgets.
- Boost construction employment ahead of the recovery.

The projects will be financed using revenue bonds which frees up money without committing future operating budget resources. It uses three revenue bonds, and other fund sources such as higher education facilities bonds backed by building fees. The House also released their version of the Jobs NOW package and I am pleased that my number one priority for capital projects in the district, the Biomedical and Health Sciences Building at the Riverpoint Campus, was included in both bills. While it is early in the process, this is very good news.

Aviation Biofuel

Washington State is a national leader in both aviation technologies and renewable resources, but so far the airline industry has been powered by out-of-state sources of fuel. Last week, we held a hearing on a bill I introduced, which would foster a regional supply chain for aviation biofuels, creating jobs for our state while reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

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[Senate Bill 6238](#) and its companion [House Bill 2422](#), prime sponsored by my seatmate Representative Andy Billig, would grant aviation biofuel production facilities access to special financing and expedited permitting, as well as establish a forum for stakeholder collaboration. The biofuels envisioned in this bill would be produced from byproducts of logging and other industries, without expanding current logging practices. Businesses are confident that the products in development will quickly become commercially viable—Alaska Airlines is already running flights partly powered by biofuels, and the Department of Defense would like to incorporate Washington biofuels into their operations.

I am encouraged by the widespread positive response to this legislation. On Monday, representatives from Boeing, WSU, the Department of Housing and Finance, the Department of Natural Resources, and Climate Solutions all testified in favor of this bill at a public hearing. Each of these groups anticipates that this bill will create jobs throughout the supply chain and develop a product that is both commercially and environmentally sustainable. I am pleased to bring so many voices together in support of this win-win legislation which will certainly have a positive impact in Eastern Washington and the state.

Marriage equality hearing closely watched

In a two-hour hearing last week over an intensely personal issue for many Washingtonians, supporters and opponents of legislation to allow same-sex marriage took turns making their case respectfully.

The hearing drew hundreds of participants and intense observers, with some conducting outdoor rallies, but throughout the hearing both sides expressed their views calmly and courteously. The overflow crowd filled not just the committee hearing room but a second hearing room, a conference room and the Senate galleries, where the hearing was telecast live via TVW on large screens.

I believe that providing same-sex couples with the same rights and responsibilities as traditional married couples is the right thing to do, and that making a distinction is discrimination.

There is support for marriage equality around the state, and right here at home: Spokane passed an anti-discrimination ordinance before the State Legislature began extending rights to same-sex couples. I voted on the civil rights bill first year in legislature in '93, and each time we've passed a bill, it's created the opportunity for

more education.

For me, a very gratifying part of being part of the legislature is being involved in this civil rights expansion. The proposed legislation is only a small step beyond the popularly-termed “everything but marriage” law, which was approved by a public vote and which affords nearly all of the Washington state rights and obligations of marriage to domestic partners.

Some people have expressed concerns about marriage equality on religious grounds, but the proposed legislation exempts any clergy person from the obligation to perform a marriage. It also asserts that no religious institution can be required to offer its facilities for a service. The purpose of this legislation is to protect the rights of all people—to ensure the rights of individuals to marry the person they love while preserving religious freedoms. My views on this matter have been greatly influenced by my sister, who has been in a stable, committed relationship with her partner for twenty years.

You can [read more about the legislation here](#). There will be a vote on the Senate floor likely tomorrow and you can follow the debate and vote on TVW (Comcast channel 25) or view it streaming online at <http://www.tvw.org/>.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, you can contact me via email or through my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa".

Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.

