



This Week in Olympia

Jan. 18, 2011

Dear Friends,

What a wild week a little snow can make! As people try to make their way to Olympia to testify on bills in hearings that have been scheduled, snow and the threat of even more snow, has created some difficulties. But we are trying to manage and accommodate people's schedules. On Monday, I was pleased to welcome Daniel Keane from a local Burien day spa, to testify on my proposal to allow day spas to serve a complementary glass of wine. [SB 6060](#) would create a permit system for spas that wish to provide this amenity for their customers.

Medical Cannabis

Today we welcomed many constituents and citizens from around the state who support [SB 6265](#), creating a safe and

[*A Bill of Local Interest*](#)

[*Medical Cannabis*](#)

[*Washington Investment Trust*](#)

[*BHP and DL*](#)

[*Help with Rx Drugs*](#)

[*Affordable K-12 Health Care*](#)

[*Fighting Sex Trafficking*](#)

legal system for patients using medical marijuana for a public hearing in the Health and Long Term Care Committee. The snow reduced the expected size of the crowd; usually we have hearing rooms that are standing room only on these types of bills.



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Check out “In the Loop”

If you’d like to keep up with legislative actions, you can check out the Senate [podcast](#) “In the Loop” for a summary of the week’s events or visit us on Twitter [@WASenDemocrats](#). A tip for Twitter users – follow [#waleg](#) to see what other people are saying about the Washington State Legislature.

Washington Investment Trust

As this regular session gets into full swing, I wanted to share some of my goals. Obviously our budget deficit remains a major challenge. I am looking for new ways to find resources, including sponsoring the Washington Investment Trust, [SB 6310](#). This bill would establish a financial entity to invest in public infrastructure with public dollars, and also provide student loans for low income students. SB 6310 is sometimes called a “state bank,” but it does not provide for typical commercial banking services for customers. It is more like an investment bank. By using the leverage available to financial entities, we may be able to provide a larger amount of public financing for us to create jobs.

BHP and DL

Another goal of mine is to find a way to keep the Basic Health Plan and our Disability Lifeline program alive. The Governor’s proposed budget eliminated both of these critical state health programs. I am searching for a way to finance both these programs. We may have to create a new revenue stream for them, but discussions continue on exactly how to get enough votes to come up with the funding we need.

Help with Rx Drugs

In another attempt to stretch our scarce dollars, we also have three prescription drug redistribution bills. [SB 6051](#) allows individuals to return unused prescription drugs to their health care providers or pharmacists to be donated to those who have no way to pay for their prescriptions. In addition [SB 6048](#) allows nursing homes to recycle patient prescriptions that are secured in “bubble packs” and have been in the secure care of the nursing home. Finally, we have [SB 6049](#), a bill allowing for the specific redistribution of cancer drugs. These oncology

prescriptions are extraordinarily expensive, and cancer patients often have changes in their prescriptions that result in unused prescriptions. All of these drug reuse proposals exempt controlled substances, and require donated drugs to be in tamper proof, un-opened original containers.

Affordable K-12 Health Care

I am also supporting a measure to consolidate K-12 health care benefits. I think that this approach will create significant budget savings. In our state, every individual school district has separate health plans, separate health pools and most have very high premiums for family coverage. Teachers and classified employees face monthly premiums of more than \$800 to enroll in the available health plans. By consolidating health care at the state level, similar to the state employees' health plan, we can provide greater equity between family and individual health plans. The state level approach will also be able to provide vision and dental coverage. The state spends about a billion dollars a year to purchase health benefits for K-12 employees, and it seems reasonable to find a more transparent and efficient way to provide decent benefits at reasonable costs.

Fighting Sex Trafficking

On a non-budget topic, I am working with a coalition of advocates who are fighting sex trafficking. It appears that there is a new "gateway" to prostitution and sex trafficking in the business of foot massage. Currently these practitioners have no Department of Health oversight or credentialing. I have proposed two bills, [SB 6103](#) and [SB 6104](#), to establish oversight and eliminate using this "gateway" to the horrible crime of sex trafficking. These two bills are part of a package of bills to address the increasing concern about human trafficking in our state.

We are just getting into the rhythm of the short 60-day 2012 session, and many bills have yet to be put forward. As we get into “the weeds” of both the budget and the bills being proposed, I will send you my weekly update. As always, please feel free to contact me about issues of concern to you. I have a wonderful team this year, including Lloyd Tommila and Lily Burtis, who are working in my office for the session who help me respond to your calls, e-mails and letters. Thank you all for your concern and interest in your state government.

Always,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Keiser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Karen Keiser