

2012 Legislative News

Tami Green

28th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



KEEPING IN TOUCH

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Dear neighbors,

What happened in Olympia this year, and how will it affect our families, schools and businesses back home in the 28th District?

This newsletter is meant to give you some answers.

It's also a chance to hear from you. Listening to you is a fundamental part of my job, and some of the best ideas for reforms come from everyday citizens who see a common problem, something that affects us all, and figures out a solution.

Getting citizens involved is critical to our democracy, especially in Washington state, which doesn't have a full-time Legislature – we have citizen-lawmakers instead, who work part-time. I'm back at my regular job as a nurse. As the wife of a veteran, a mother and grandmother, I find a lot in common with the people I meet every day in the 28th District. Regardless of our political beliefs, in the end we all want the same things: good schools, more jobs, quality health care, clean air and water, and less traffic congestion.

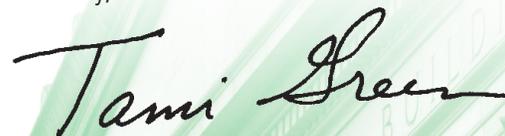
Now that the House and Senate have finished, I'm back at my regular job as a nurse. As the wife of a soldier, a mother and grandmother, I find a lot in common with the people I meet every day in the 28th District. Regardless of our political beliefs, in the end we all want the same things: better schools, more jobs, better health care and less traffic gridlock.

I believe having citizen-lawmakers helps keep our state ahead of the rest of the nation, because we're usually back home instead of in a bubble. It keeps us focused on those kitchen-table issues like balancing the budget, health care and jobs. Inside this newsletter, you'll find updates about those big issues.

There isn't enough space to talk about everything that happened in Olympia this year. If you've got a question about a specific issue or piece of legislation, don't hesitate to call or email. I'll find the answer for you.

Thank you again for the honor and privilege of serving as our representative. I hope you and your family are doing well. As always, I welcome your questions, comments and ideas. — and I hope you'll take the time to join my 28th District telephone town hall from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on May 9.

Sincerely,



Tami Green
State Representative
28th Legislative District

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JOBS ACT

The greatest victory of the year was the passage of the construction budget and Jobs Act.

We fought hard for this bill, because it means 18,000 jobs in every corner of the state, putting people in hard hats back to work to build a better Washington.

A coalition of workers and businesses united behind the idea, which is quite simple: follow the lead of FDR during the Depression and Republican Gov. Dan Evans during a tough recession in the 1970s. Both leaders realized that tweaking laws and playing with the tax code wouldn't create the massive amounts of jobs needed to jolt Washington state – and America – from a horrible economic downturn.

The best way to put people to work is to do it directly, and to have them build things that will benefit all citizens and businesses, create jobs once their projects are complete and improve the lives of our children and grandchildren.

That's the idea behind the Jobs Act, which leverages matching funds and creative financing to maximize the amount of jobs we can create quickly. With unemployment among construction workers at 30 percent and interest rates at a 50-year low, there has never been a better time to build.

We also passed a transportation budget that will create jobs in every corner of our state, with major work including railroads, highways and ferry projects right here in Pierce County, like the HOV lanes on I-5 and the Puyallup River Bridge replacement.



LOCAL CONSTRUCTION & JOBS NOW PROJECTS

\$39.1 million	Tacoma Community College Health Careers Center
\$777,000	Springbrook water main replacement
\$330,000	Lakewood drywell replacement



TOWN HALL BY TELEPHONE

Please join me for a telephone town hall meeting from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on May 9.

It's a chance for me to hear directly from you – and to answer your questions, live.

I hope you have the time to participate!

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HEALTH CARE

While national health care reform (the Affordable Care Act) has gotten a lot of attention, what we're doing here in Washington state will make a huge difference.

It's in the states where things will actually happen, and the steps we're taking in the Legislature will improve how you deal with health care -- as a worker, a patient or a business owner.

Our health care system is founded on the free market, and any economist will tell you that free markets work best when (a) consumers have good information to make choices and (b) there's real competition for goods and services.

Health coverage has become so complicated, though, that you'd have to be not only a health care expert, but a contracts lawyer to read the fine print and compare two different health care policies.

That's not good for anybody. It hurts the free market.

A huge reform we passed this year, the Health Benefits Exchange (House Bill 2319), will make it much simpler for workers and businesses to compare health insurance plans.

You'll be able to see, in plain English, what plans cover, what they don't and how much they cost.

The Health Benefits Exchange will:

- Protect consumers by making it easier to shop for health plans and truly compare prices, services offered and quality of care.
- Help those with chronic health problems or high-cost illnesses get health coverage.
- Establish minimum standards for consumer protection, covered services, healthcare provider selection and financial solvency.

The Exchange will also make it easier for people with serious health problems to get coverage. Finally, it will make it easier for small businesses to offer affordable health coverage to workers.

Many parts of health care reform are already implemented here in Washington state, including coverage for your children up until age 26 – basically, until they're out of college and on their feet – and a prohibition on denying coverage to children based on pre-existing medical conditions. That provision will extend to adults, too, in 2014.

Health care is a huge part of our economy now, but it's not about money. It's about taking care of our loved ones, our sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. The good health of your loved ones is irreplaceable. That's why reforming health care is so important. We have to get it right. There's too much at stake and too many people struggling to get health coverage they can afford.

Success isn't a pipe dream. Our state has led the nation in health care reforms like the Basic Health Plan, the Patients' Bill of Rights and Cover All Kids. We should continue to have the courage and creativity to keep on innovating and reforming the system to protect patients and make health care more affordable -- not for some, but for all of our citizens.



Rep. Tami Green speaking on the house floor.

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BALANCING THE BUDGET

Ever since the global economic crash of 2008, lawmakers have been cutting billions and billions of dollars to balance the budget.

We've cut schools and universities, health care and prisons – everything.

This year, we were facing another \$1.5 billion in cuts. The budget proposed by Gov. Chris Gregoire late last year looked awful: more cuts to schools and universities, giant cuts to health care and seniors, to the disabled, the environment, you name it.

I am happy to tell you that we worked hard – very hard – to find smart and creative ways to avoid the worst of those cuts.

The budget we passed is balanced without cuts to public schools and universities. We preserved the safety net, which is essential during tough times. And we protected essential programs like the Basic Health Plan, which is the only possible health coverage that many working poor can afford.

Thankfully, our economy is picking up again. It takes more than one punch to knock out Washington state, and I hope this is the end of year after year of budget cuts.

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