



2012 Final Legislative Report

46th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Spring 2012

Keeping in Touch

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- Education Appropriations & Oversight
- Higher Education
- Environment

Dear Neighbors,

Last fall, I was chosen by the King County Council to serve on your behalf in our state's House of Representatives. I was appointed in the middle of December's special session that was called to deal with an estimated \$2 billion budget shortfall.

I have spent my career directing environmental and consumer groups. I serve as Director of Heart of America Northwest, the group leading efforts to clean-up Hanford, and as a public interest attorney. I also teach at the University of Washington in the School of Public Health, and run a program to train and inspire law students to work for the public good. My wife and I have two children, and we have spent hundreds of hours volunteering for our public schools.

I believe that our state's budget decisions earlier in the recession have been robbing our children of their futures. I went to Olympia to work on a budget that didn't cut health and education. The day after I was sworn in, I went straight to work on my priorities:

- **Making our tax system fair and ensuring stable revenue sources:** I sponsored legislation to end tax giveaways and exemptions that do not create jobs, to end the out-of-state sales tax exemption (which is exclusive to Washington), and to place a tax on unearned income (capital gains) - revenues we need for health and education.
- **Protecting consumers:** When I saw news reports about people being charged up to \$2,000 by towing companies just because they parked in the wrong spot, I immediately drafted legislation to end predatory towing charges.
- **Fostering and funding education:** I successfully led efforts to reverse proposals to eliminate work study and need grant programs for Washington residents. We need these programs to make our community colleges and four-year universities more affordable for Washington residents.
- **Safety for our kids and the environment:** I worked to help pass the Toxic Free Kids Act in the House, by combatting the chemical industry's claims that toxins were at safe levels in shampoos, bottles, bedding and other children's products. I also introduced legislation to require consideration of impacts on transit levels from new developments.

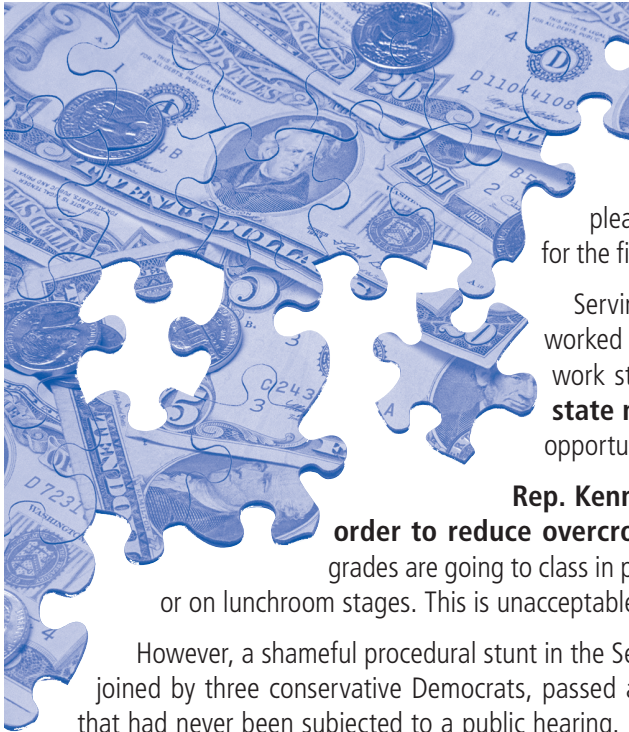
Thank you to the thousands of you who have written, called or taken the time to meet with me-including at my in-district drop in office hours during the session. I am committed to being as open and accessible as possible. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,

Gerry
Gerry



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A budget that reflects our values

I believe that our budgets are the ultimate reflection of our state's values. When I was appointed in December, our state was facing a \$2 billion deficit. Proposed cuts supported by Governor Gregoire and many news outlets would have been devastating to both education and health. I am pleased to report that the House Democratic budget, which served as the basis for the final negotiated budget, does not continue to rob our children of their future.

Serving on the Higher Education and Education Appropriations Committees, I worked to ensure that we reversed the Governor's proposed elimination of college work study and **succeeded in efforts to restore millions in the form of state need grants**. Without these need grants and work study, we would deny opportunity to tens of thousands of our state's residents.

Rep. Kenney and I secured funds to open the Marshall School building in order to reduce overcrowding in North Seattle public schools. Currently, children in early grades are going to class in portables without bathrooms and having reading instruction in the hallways or on lunchroom stages. This is unacceptable, and our children deserve better.

However, a shameful procedural stunt in the Senate forced us into overtime without a budget. Republicans in the Senate, joined by three conservative Democrats, passed a budget that had never been subjected to a public hearing. In what I called "a roll call of shame" that went on until 2AM, the Senate turned down efforts to restore funding to protect children's health and education.

Some of the priorities reflected in the Senate Republican budget included:

- A \$67 million diversion of hazardous waste clean-up funds necessary to protect communities from toxic waste exposure into the general fund.
- Chopping \$43.9 million from basic education. *In fact, their budget funded cash prizes at county fairs while they voted down an amendment to provide reading tutors for kids because it wasn't "essential".*
- Cutting \$200 million in support for poor children and families, including \$42 million from housing support and eliminating the food assistance program entirely.

I wanted to avoid a special session as much as anyone, but I could simply not support a budget that puts our children's future, health and environment in jeopardy.

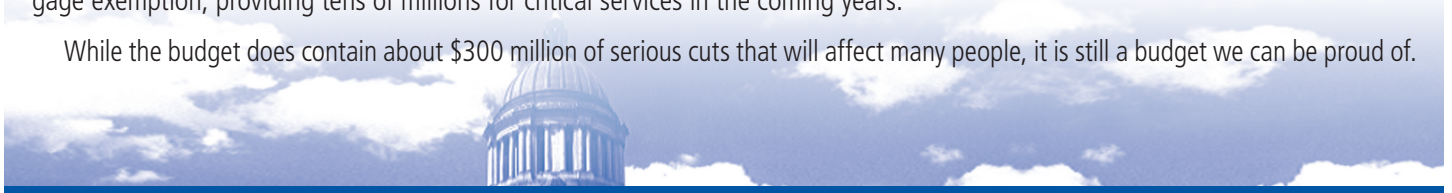
In the end, we agreed on a budget that is balanced, responsible, and sustainable. The final operating budget contains no cuts to K-12 education or higher education. It protects important safety net services like the Basic Health Plan, Disability Lifeline, and family planning grants. Programs designed to give struggling Washingtonians a hand-up: Working Connections, TANF, and the Housing and Essential Needs program are all funded in this budget.

And, for the first time in years, we closed a major tax loophole. We eliminated the out-of-state Wall Street bank mortgage exemption, providing tens of millions for critical services in the coming years.

While the budget does contain about \$300 million of serious cuts that will affect many people, it is still a budget we can be proud of.



Rep. Pollet speaks on the House floor.



Gerry Pollet STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Making voting easier- especially for our students



Did you know: Despite a policy that ballot drop boxes should be in urban centers, only the Magnuson Park drop-box has been available to North Seattle residents in recent years.

This presents a problem for students and staff at UW and North Seattle Community College (NSCC), as well as for the thousands of people who use the Opportunity Center at NSCC for workforce training and other services.

Folks enrolled at public universities or at community or technical colleges have a unique perspective, whether it be a young person grappling with rising tuition costs or a laid-off worker returning to school for training. These are exactly the kind of voices we need to hear from at the ballot box, yet turnout among young people is consistently lower than other age groups.

Earlier this year I sent a letter asking King County Elections Director Sherril Huff to place a ballot drop box at campuses in King County. I'm pleased that UW will have a box this fall, and I will keep working with student leaders and campus administrators across Washington with the goal of eventu-

ally getting ballot drop boxes at every college or university campus in the state.

Improving openness, accountability and trust



Public record and open meeting laws are the cornerstone for public trust and participation. Our state has one of the strongest laws recognizing that city and state agencies' records are public records – they are to be open for you to access. Unfortunately, public records are compromised because public officials simply don't understand what is required by law.

Recent Washington State Supreme Court decisions have suggested that training for public officials could reduce penalties paid by state and local agencies for violations. Since the taxpayer ultimately foots the bill when public records laws are broken, I sponsored legislation to ensure that officials at the top of state, county, and city governments attend a short web-based class on basic open-government principles.

I'll continue to work to protect the public's right to know through my work in the Legislature.



Thank you for your service, Rep. Gutiérrez Kenney!

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Representative Phyllis Gutiérrez Kenney for her years of service to the people of the 46th Legislative District. She has been a groundbreaking leader for social justice, working families and opportunity for all the people of Washington.

I am thankful for the short time I've served alongside with Rep. Gutiérrez Kenney, who is not running for reelection. I will continue to seek her guidance and input as part of our 46th District's legislative team

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Ending predatory towing practices



scrupulous towing companies, which is why I'll be working to get this bill passed next session.

You likely know someone who parked in the wrong spot in a private lot and was charged hundreds of dollars, even up to \$2,000, by the towing company to get their car back. I was shocked, as were many Seattle residents, to learn that our state had no law to prevent the widespread price-gouging by towing companies reported by the Seattle Times' Danny Westneat late last year.

The first piece of legislation I drafted and introduced would have put an end to predatory towing practices and cap towing rates. No one should have their car held hostage for a mortgage payment or a month's rent just because you parked in the wrong spot. My bill cleared the House of Representatives and the Senate Transportation Committee, but failed to be approved by the full Senate on the night that the Senate floor was taken over (see budget section).

It's unacceptable to me to leave the public at the mercy of un-

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