

Legislative Report TO THE 49TH DISTRICT



State Representative
Sharon Wylie

Spring 2020

Dear friends and neighbors,

Like many of you, I am trying to do what I can to keep others safe and slow the spread of coronavirus in our communities. This is tough, we worry about our loved ones, especially those who are older and more vulnerable, and we miss family and friends, whose close presence makes our lives joyful and full.

COVID-19 is so new that we are learning how to fight it as we go. What's clear is that it gets transferred from person to person very easily and the best way to avoid that is by **staying home and away from others as much as possible**, which is proving difficult for many of us. But we have to keep at it in order to defeat this virus.

Much of what we dealt with this session has paled with the current situation, but we did accomplish important things that are worth mentioning. **In this post session report you'll find:**

- How we dealt with the **car tabs** initiative.
- What the **sexual health education** law actually does.
- A couple of **bills that directly address two recent tragedies** in our district.
- Resources where you can get **current COVID-19 information** and help.

My legislative assistant and I are both working from home, but that doesn't mean we are not reachable. Please send me an email and let me know how you're weathering this storm. Continue practicing social distancing, it's the only way to protect your family, and help our health care system from becoming overwhelmed.

My best to you and yours,

Sharon Wylie
Rep. Sharon Wylie



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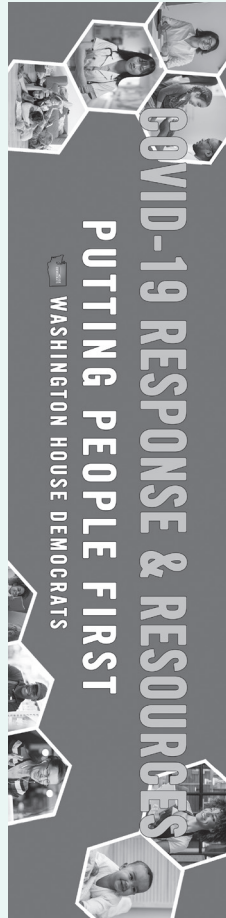
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To mitigate the impact that COVID-19 has on our communities, the Legislature acted quickly and early by allocating **\$225 million for coronavirus response:**

- **\$175 million** for direct response to the health crisis
- **\$25 million** for worker and business protections
- **\$25 million** in federal funds to help state agencies, local governments, and tribes respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

At these trying times it's important to know where to go for information and help. I've sent out several electronic COVID-19 updates over the past couple of months that include many useful links and information. If you are not on my email list, you can read them on my website:

<https://housedemocrats.wa.gov/wylie/>

Here are some additional resources you may want to check out:

- The state COVID-19 page: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/>
- Washington's Dept. of Health coronavirus page: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus>
- DOH coronavirus call center: **1-800-525-0127** from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Our own caucus coronavirus site: <https://housedemocrats.wa.gov/covid-19>
- Clark County's page: <https://www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/novel-coronavirus>
- WA 211: <https://wa211.org/> or **dial 2-1-1**. 2-1-1 can help connect you to a wide range of community services.

ADDRESSING THE LICENSE TABS ISSUE

Last year, which seems so long ago, voters passed an initiative regarding the cost of car license tabs and the ability of local governments to raise revenue to fix our transportation system. As first vice chair of the Transportation Committee I was part of the bipartisan budget team that wrote the 2019-2021 transportation budget last year.

This session, the initiative was the law of the land and even though it was being challenged in court, we followed that law and rewrote the budget.

Led by our committee chair, Rep. Jake Fey, we agreed up front that we would protect vulnerable people who need public transit, uphold as much as possible our commitment to maintenance and repair of existing roads and bridges and, lastly, keep in place and finish projects that had already started.

We were able to fulfill our conditions, but so many projects important to our future safety and economic development in all communities of our state face uncertainty.

For details on projects in our area, please go to <http://fiscal.wa.gov/TransportationMaps.aspx> and select the 49th district.



SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

I continue receiving form emails bashing **Senate Bill 5395**, the comprehensive sexual health education legislation passed this session. This bill generated more anger, misinformation and misunderstanding than I have seen in my time in the legislature, so I want to clarify a few misconceptions.

I understand the natural concerns parents have about their children's education. This is an important discussion that needs to be based on facts rather than misleading information.

Here is what the bill actually does:

- Requires schools to teach social-emotional learning (SEL) for grades K-3 to help kids understand how to be good friends, how to ask for permission to hug someone, how to refuse unwanted hugs, recognize

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

continued

inappropriate touch, and identify trusted adults. Many school districts are already teaching SEL, and the learning standards haven't changed.

- Maintains local control by putting the curriculum choice in the hands of local school boards and school districts. The state learning standards remain largely the same as they have since 2006.
- Preserves a parent's right to opt their child out of learning the locally chosen curriculum.
- Requires districts to more clearly communicate to parents when and how this adoption process will occur and what specific content the district has decided will be taught at each grade level, for optimum family communication and transparency.

TWO TRAGIC EVENTS – TWO NECESSARY BILLS

Many bills are introduced every session, each one requires a lot of research and long hours from staff, and sometimes two or more bills end up being very similar. I believe this type of repetition is a waste of time and resources, so I often choose to support good ideas rather than duplicate. As lawmakers, we don't need to have our names on a piece of legislation to work hard for its passage and thus provide comfort and safety for some and knowledge and understanding for others.

I worked hard on a variety of issues both great and small. Some stretched my mind and others filled my heart and brought tears to my eyes. I was particularly invested in getting a couple of very important bills passed, especially after two tragic events that happened right here in Vancouver:

Tiffany's Law

Last November, Tiffany Hill was murdered by her estranged husband right in front of their three children. Two months earlier, he'd been arrested for domestic violence, but he made bail and went after her even though he was under a no-contact court order. Tiffany did everything she could to protect herself, the police also did all they could, and the joint prosecuting team had taken every action in the book. Still, none of those things stopped her killer because he was on the street and could get to her.

More than 35 years ago I worked for one of the states' early rape crisis centers. We testified in favor of a law to make it illegal for a husband to beat up and rape his wife. We've come a long way, but we haven't gone far enough—yet.

TWO TRAGIC EVENTS *continued*

I resolved to take action and introduced a bill to update the process for granting bail, but it would have required a constitutional amendment, and it died early in session. We did pass **Senate Bill 5149**, sponsored by Sen. Lynda Wilson, which provides electronic ankle bracelets with real time notification of targeted persons when the person under a restraining order is nearby. Had Tiffany's husband been required to wear such a device, she might be alive today.

Nikki's Law

A bill, introduced in 2019 by then Representative Derek Stanford, that failed to pass, would have made Washington one of the states to take a stand and protect our transgender community from assault and violence. Some people commit heinous crimes against transgender persons and then defend themselves in court by saying that they panicked when they found out the person was trans, so they claim they were justified in hurting, or even killing them.

You may remember the case of a young trans teen who was murdered last summer, and whose body was discovered in the winter after a search that engaged many in our community. Since Derek had moved over to the Senate, I decided to shepherd **House Bill 1687** and brought it to House Floor where we named it "Nikki's Law." It passed both chambers almost unanimously and the governor signed it on March 5th, making Washington the 10th state to outlaw the LGBTQ+ panic defense.



I learned so much about the wonderful person Nikki Kuhnhausen was from spending time with her mom before and after we passed the bill. It is my sincere hope that this new law brings Nikki's family and friends some comfort.