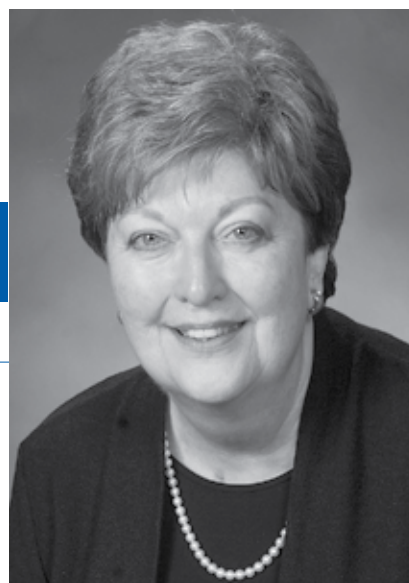


Washington State Senator • 38th Legislative District  
**Senator Jean Berkey**

**Neighborhood Newsletter**



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**Senator Jean Berkey**

represents the 38th Legislative District, covering the Everett and Marysville area. She is Chair of the Senate Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee and a member of the Higher Education and Transportation Committees. Visit her Web site at [www.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/berkey.htm](http://www.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/berkey.htm).

Dear Neighbors,

The short 60 day Legislative session adjourned in March — as Chair of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee and as your Senator from the 38th Legislative District, I'm sending you a brief update about what we accomplished during the 2008 session.

One key issue I'm watching is the condition of our national economy and how the national slowdown is impacting Washington families. Washington state was able to avoid the national economic trend for more than a year, but now that is changing. We must prepare the state budget for an economic slowdown. That means being careful in our spending, and saving every dollar.

We made progress for our state's students this year — by taking a close look and developing programs to give all students a chance to succeed and earn a meaningful diploma. I also have been hard at work, during session and currently, to continue planning for a much needed University of Washington campus in Snohomish County. During this past session we made progress, but not enough to seal the deal. Again, as we move into 2009, I'll continue my work on the Senate Higher Education Committee to make UW North Sound a reality.

It's a privilege serving you. Please feel free to contact me via phone, e-mail or through my Web site. By working together, we'll continue to have a positive impact for our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean".

Senator Jean Berkey

### Managing finances: Home owners and buyers get some help with first bill to pass legislature



The world of finance is complicated. I'm pleased that my bill helping families impacted by the mortgage crisis was the first bill to pass the Legislature this year, and the second bill signed by the governor. **(Senate Bill 6272)**

This legislation will focus on public awareness through statewide consumer education and outreach programs. It will provide free financial counseling assistance for borrowers at risk of foreclosure and first-time home buyers. This free financial counseling and education will help homeowners at risk of losing their homes understand their options, avoid problems with over-extending credit and make sound decisions that work for their families. To take advantage of this program, or to learn more, go to [www.dfi.wa.gov](http://www.dfi.wa.gov) or call the toll-free number 1-877-894-HOME.

Governor Gregoire signs the second bill of the 2008 Legislative Session, Senate Bill 6272, sponsored by Senator Berkey.

### Fighting identity theft and financial crime

Identity theft and financial crimes impact all of us. As Chair of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee, I'm seeing that financial crimes and identity theft are becoming more sophisticated and harder to detect. With cases on the rise, requiring more attention from law enforcement, we approved a program that develops additional ways to focus resources solely on identity theft and fraud.

These crimes are draining resources from our police and sheriff agencies and the court system. Two task forces were created to coordinate efforts by police, prosecutors, the banking industry and the attorney general.

### Supporting our students and teachers

We made historic improvements in our education system during the 2007 session to help students succeed. In 2008, we've ensured that our schools continue to have the tools and support needed to provide the world-class education we expect.

- Our students need meaningful diplomas: We want to send a clear message to students who struggle with the WASL or coursework requirements that the help they need to succeed is available. We unanimously passed legislation to improve programs to keep the school door open for students who don't meet graduation standards by the end of 12th grade, giving them real options to earn their diploma. **(Senate Bill 6673)**
- Math education – rigor and relevance: I supported a bill to monitor our state's math standards to ensure they're relevant to what

students need in today's workforce. The plan aims to enhance clarity and consistency in math curriculum and provide more guidance for teachers. It also supports work by the State Board of Education and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop new high school math standards. And with the math WASL, we're looking at new ways we can measure student learning with end-of-course exams, instead of a one-size fits all test. **(Senate Bill 6534)**



## The Economy: Hard times on your pocketbook

We need to prepare for an uncertain economic horizon, largely driven by the housing market slump. Our state economy is still healthy compared to the national situation, and according to national publications like Forbes Magazine, Washington is still one of the nation's best places to do business.



But that doesn't mean a lot to families who are struggling to make ends meet. The price of everything – from gasoline to groceries – is rising at an alarming rate. It all adds up, making a big dent in the pocketbooks of all of us.

As we wrote our 2008 supplemental budget, I was committed to making sure that we were not only very careful about what we were spending money on, but that we

were putting enough into our state savings account. We may be facing an economic downturn that is already occurring at the national level. Just like hard working families have to, senate democrats wrote a responsible budget: keeping commitments that we've made to education, tax relief and transportation, but also putting more than \$800 million into state savings accounts.

The Senate this year approved a plan that would have increased the disposable income thresholds by \$5,000 each to qualify for senior and disabled property tax exemption and deferral programs. Although this did not pass the House, I will continue work to ensure that we're providing the help that many seniors need.

We also worked to provide tax relief for low-wage workers. When funded and implemented, the Working Families' Tax Credit will refund some of the state sales tax to low-wage working people who qualify for the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit. The Working Families Tax Credit is projected to help 7,735 families in the 38th Legislative District – approximately 14 percent of tax filers – by bringing \$1,240,000 to those eligible. **(Senate Bill 6809)**

As our economic picture unfolds, I'll remain committed to supporting state budgets that protect essential services like education, public safety and senior/social programs.

## Expanding services to help care for our senior citizen community

It's important to keep families together. During the legislative session, we expanded programs to provide seniors with more medical and dental care options. I care very deeply about the issues facing our seniors.

We expanded the number of slots available to families for respite care, increasing the support to families with a loved one at risk for institutional placement as their care needs increase. As another part of this work, we approved allowing unpaid caregivers to receive training to provide care for their disabled or elderly relatives in their own homes. The Legislature also directed \$3 million to fund wage increases for those making under \$13 an hour at nursing homes – a much deserved raise for our lowest-paid caregivers.

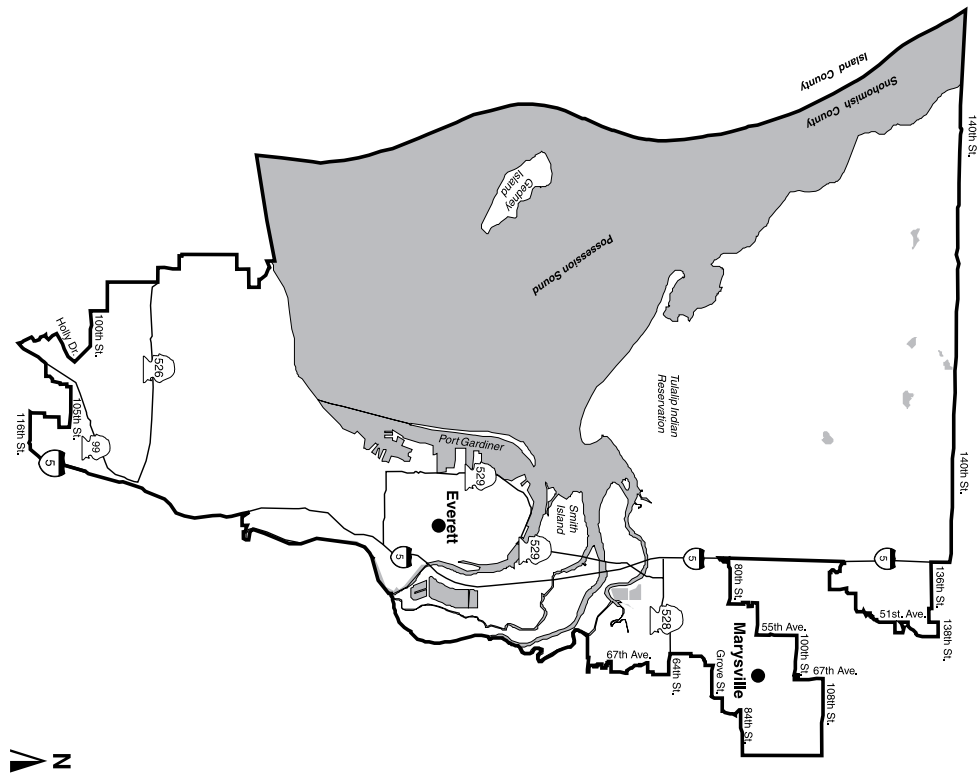


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**SEE INSIDE:**

- Fighting Identity Theft
- Help for Homeowners and Buyers
- Our Economy: Preparing for What's Ahead

# 38th Legislative District



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