***Tips for Writing to Your Legislators***

**Writing to legislators is one way you can influence policy makers and educate them on issues and perspective.**

**Use a proper salutation:** such as "Dear Representative Smith" or Dear Senator Smith."

**Keep it brief:** Keep letters to one page. Discuss only one bill or issue in a letter.

**Identify yourself:** Introduce yourself or the organization on whose behalf you are writing. Use a simple statement, such as "I am a retired teacher from the Everett School District."

**Focus on key points:** Follow your introduction with a brief statement of your concern. If you are writing about a specific bill, include the bill number. Explain why you support or oppose the issue. A few strong, well-thought-out arguments are most effective.

**Tell your own story:** Explain why your position is important. Explain how a bill will impact you or others. If you can, share a story that illustrates the problem you are facing.

**Be individual:** Don't use form letters or generic postcards- they don't work. Instead, share your own thoughts and experience with your legislator.

**Be polite and reasonable:** Use a polite and informative tone. Never be insulting or make "demands."

**In closing** **recap your main points and encourage specific action**: Don't be vague. Be as clear, concise and as specific as you can.

**Allow for follow-up:** Include your contact information and telephone number in case your legislator or his/her staff needs additional information.

**Using e-mail:** E-mail can be an easy and effective tool for communicating with legislators. The tips outlined above for writing letters to legislators also apply to e-mails.

**Avoid informal language:** E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a written letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. 

**Even in email include your full address and zip code**: Make sure the text of your e-mail includes your full name, telephone number and street address, including zip code.

**Spell check everything:** Be sure to spell check every letter and proof carefully for grammar and punctuation. It wouldn't hurt to ask a colleague to review the letter prior to mailing.