



The INTERACT Newsletter

Spring 2011

Inside...

Message from the Chair

By Genevieve O'Sullivan, State Auditor's Office



A Time of Transition

Transition is a word we have heard many times over the past couple years. Whether it has touched

sure you are aware of your needs, so you don't run yourself down. When you are going through a particularly stressful transition time in your life, this becomes even more important. Be aware of your limits and needs, and make sure to take some time to relax and absorb the changes happening in your life.

As we inevitably approach more times of transition in the next few months, remember the definition: movement, passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept, etc., to another; change. My point -- it will pass. Some doors will open and others will close, but keep in mind that change will happen. This isn't your first transition and it will not be your last. Embrace the change you are about to endure and make the most of it. ■

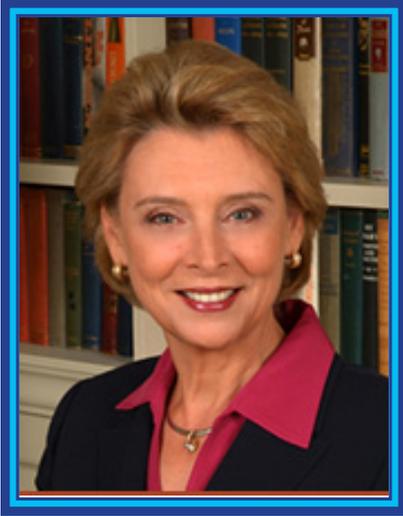
Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights. ~Pauline R. Kezer

your job, family, or life in general, transition can be both positive and negative. I recently decided to accept a position with a different agency. On the surface, it looks like a pretty simple transition. Give two weeks' notice, start a new job with new challenges and opportunities. That is just the beginning. Although I am excited about my new career path, I am very sad to leave a group of people that I consider a great team and good friends. It has been a very bittersweet transition for me.

ICSEW is approaching its annual transition. Each July we have a transition meeting that gives us an opportunity to recognize outstanding members, welcome new members and say goodbye to outgoing members. Just like any transition, this one is also bittersweet. We are excited to meet the new appointees, but sad to see our outgoing members leave.

I've talked about self-care in past articles. It is so important to make

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Interact with Governor Gregoire

Did you know you can: ask the Governor a question, request her or her staff's help, invite her to an event, or even request a meeting with her?

All you have to do is visit her [website](#). Go ahead, give it a try!

Giving Power to Your Dreams

Anna Gill, Utilities and Transportation Commission

Everyone has dreams. Why do some people seem to reach those dreams and others don't? Cathy Callahan, Executive Director of Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) shared how she was able to give power to her dreams with the ICSEW general membership at our March meeting.

"Find your passion and do what it takes to get there," Cathy said as her opening remarks. I thought that was a pretty profound statement. Is it really that easy? No, perhaps not, but it is a good start. She continued her story by telling us about where she came from, growing up in a very different Olympia than we have today. She told us how she had attended the University of Washington for a time, planning on majoring in French. College didn't come as easy to her as high school, mainly because she just wasn't into it. After a talk with her father, Cathy decided to quit school and enter the workforce.

Cathy was able to get a job with the Anaheim Public Library and found she really enjoyed the work. After some time, Cathy realized she wouldn't be able to move up with the company unless she had a college degree. It was then, with renewed motivation, Cathy made the decision to go back to school.

After receiving her undergrad from the University of Oregon, Cathy went to graduate school, focusing on labor relations.

Throughout her career, Cathy was able to take advantage of opportunities, each giving her

new experience, knowledge and vision, shaping her dreams. She now finds herself close to retirement as the director of PERC with a wealth of experiences which have led her to this point. She attributes her success to hard work and luck. "You have to do what you need to do," she says of achieving your goals and dreams. "Allow yourself to dream big."



Cathy Callahan,
Executive Director of PERC

Her most poignant advice was to first, "figure out what you want to do, and see if you can make it happen. Life is all about 'do-overs.'"

We can all reach our dreams if we really try. Sometimes those dreams evolve, and in the end, don't look exactly like they did when we began. The important thing is to keep moving toward them. I think that is something we should all remember when following our dreams – just go for it. And if at first we don't succeed, try, try again. ■

ICSEW Representatives "Go Red" with their Agency Co-workers for the 2011 Go Red for Women's Heart Health.

Go Red For Women celebrates the passion and power of women to band together to wipe out heart disease and stroke.



Treasurer, Webmaster and Communications Co-Chair Teresa Reno with Dept. of Ecology's director and staff.



Communications Chair Tammy Risner with some of the State Treasurer's staff.



State Auditor Brian Sonntag wears red in honor of Women's Heart Health Day.

Member Felecia McKinney poses with co-workers from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.



Conference Chair Jhenifer Morfitt poses with her co-workers from the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.



Executive Secretary to ICSEW Amy Teshera with Insurance Commissioner staff.

My Schooling Experience in the United States vs. Africa

By Nancy Heard

In our previous issue, we brought you the story of Stella Heard, a refugee from Kenya, Africa. In follow up, her daughter, Nancy, has provided us with her experience as a student in both the US and in Africa. Enjoy!

As a little girl I had always looked forward to school. I had always thought my fellow peers had the same enthusiasm I did for learning. I was, by far, mistaken. Well, when I lived in Africa, we didn't have the luxuries that are now at my disposal. School was an important part of everyday life. When I'm at school, I hear my fellow peers complain about having to be at school from 8 a.m.-2:40 p.m., and think to myself, "You should spend a couple months at the school I went to." Luckily for Georgette (my sister) and me, my mom (Stella) worked two jobs to keep us in school. Yes, to go to school in Africa, there was a price. I don't understand how my peers can't take advantage of this chance to learn for free. In Africa Georgette and I lived in a good neighborhood, thanks to my mom, with my grandmother. We had to be up by 5 a.m., we caught the bus at around 6 a.m., had an hour long bus ride and arrived at school at 7 a.m., where we remained until 6 p.m.

every evening. Believe me, I'm not complaining. Georgette and I were lucky compared to the other children. We took a bus to school and didn't have to walk miles, barefoot, just to get an education. My mom also worked hard so Georgette and I didn't go through the school day starving. So compared to my African classmates, they have it easy in America. School in Africa was strict; Georgette and I went to a Catholic school so we had a little bit of everything. We learned the Catholic ways, Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Science and Kiswahili. Kiswahili is what my friends call "my language." Surprisingly enough, I learned English before Kiswahili because my mom spoke to me in English. Although my mom was not with us for five years, our grandmother took good care of us. I miss Africa a lot, but I am glad to be in the United States. Here I have the chance to make up all the years my mom was gone, and I have a chance at a better future. ■



Nancy, Stella and Georgette



Calling all cooks! The Health & Wellness Subcommittee has a new project and needs your help. They are developing an ICSEW Healthy Recipes Cookbook and want your healthy recipes! Please send in your favorite recipes (or your mom's, or your best friend's) to [Patty Danner](#) or [Sheila Ichita](#) by Monday, May 16. Remember to give credit to your source. Thank you!

2011 ICSEW Clothing Drive

By Jolena Missildine, Department of Information Services

Despite hard economic times, Washington state employees donated items valued at more than \$68,000 during 2011 ICSEW Professional Clothing Drive. In fact, we exceeded last year's donations by \$11,000! It touches me to see the kindness and support from our fellow state employees each year. I would like to thank the following volunteers for donating their time making this drive a success:

Mary Hougan	Department of Agriculture
Genevieve O'Sullivan	State Auditor's Office
Tammy Balliett	Attorney General's Office
Rachelle Parslow	Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission
Margaret Dietrich	Employment Security Department
Samantha Smithingell	Office of Financial Management
Lynn Clevenger	Gambling Commission
Roberta Carpenter & daughter Samantha	Gambling Commission
Sheila Ichita	Department of Health
Darla Mann	Department of Information Services
Jeffrey Pearson	Department of Information Services
Amy Teshera	Office of Insurance Commissioner
Lena Wang	Labor and Industries
Jana Dutt	Military Department
Anna Jones	Department of Natural Resources
Priscilla Martinez	Department of Personnel
Janet Merz	School for the Blind
Mary Rhoades	Department of Retirement Systems
Selina Soto	Department Retirement Systems
April Karreci	Department of Social and Health Services
Cindy Doughty	Office of the State Treasurer
Heidi Mabbott	Department of Transportation
Anna Gill	Utilities and Transportation Commission

Events Co-Chair Roberta Carpenter's daughter Samantha earned 2.5 hours of community service as a volunteer at the clothing drive.

A special thank you to Shelley Sadie-Hill, Asset Manager for the Department of General Administration's Facilities Division. Shelley, we can't thank you enough for all your help with our clothing drive. You went above and beyond and we truly appreciate you.



(Clothing Drive continued on page 6)

(Clothing Drive continued)

Shaw Clifton
GENERAL

William Booth
FOUNDER

James Knaggs
TERRITORIAL COMMANDER



THE SALVATION ARMY
Founded 1865

Majors William and Joy E. Lum
CORPS COMMANDING OFFICERS

824 5th Ave. SE, Olympia, WA 98501
all mail - P.O. Box 173, Olympia, WA 98507
360.352-8596 - 360.705.3651 (fax)

Lt. Colonel Doug O'Brien
DIVISIONAL COMMANDER

www.salvationarmyolympia.org

March 23, 2011



Interagency Committee of State Employed Women
Attn: Jolena Missildine
210 - 11th Ave. SW
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Jolena:

Please extend our sincere thanks to the ICSEW and those who participated in the clothing drive that you conducted this month. We are very pleased with the nice clothing that we received including coats, jeans, shirts and shoes. Our driver, Mark said that his van was about half full of clothing.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeannie McConnell
Jeannie McConnell
Business Administrator



**DOING THE
MOST GOOD**



Subcommittee Happenings ...

Communications

- Working on InterAct Spring Issue.
- Revising and updating website.

Conference

- Securing dates and locations for the 2011 mini-conferences to be held this Fall in Spokane and Olympia.

Events

- 2011 ICSEW Clothing Drive was a success with \$68,000.00 donated.
- Starting to plan the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day event scheduled for June 23.

Gifts and Grants Ad Hoc

- Utilizing new subscription to Foundation Directory Online to compile grants calendar.
- Finalizing Café Press site for ICSEW merchandise- Go-live coming soon!
- Planning underway for first annual transition event.

Health and Wellness Subcommittee

- We all have our favorite recipes, so let's put them together for the first ever ICSEW Health & Wellness cookbook! If you'd like to participate, please e-mail your recipes, including the source, to [Patty Danner](#) by Monday, May 16. Thank you!
- Planning for the 2011 Health & Wellness Fair is now in full swing. The event is from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Thursday, June 30, at the Labor & Industries Building in Tumwater and includes a variety of vendors, interactive sessions with local gyms including Zumba!, a chef's demonstration and healthy snack samples, and much more! The Thurston County Food Bank is providing food collection barrels, so bring in a food donation and have a chance to win a prize! You might even see some fruits and vegetables running around. For more information about the event, please contact, [Patty Danner](#) or [Sheila Ichita](#).

Legislative

- Subcommittee members are actively monitoring legislation relating to ICSEW's priority areas (equal pay and opportunity, benefits, leave, and flexible scheduling). Monthly legislative updates are posted on the ICSEW website on the [Legislative Subcommittee](#) page.
- The ICSEW General Membership voted to adopt the Legislative Subcommittee's Procedure on Advising the Office of the Governor and numbered the procedure 1-01. Subcommittee members are working on developing an advisory memo template.
- On April 21, subcommittee members met to review agency policies on flexible scheduling and telecommuting. The goal of the project is to identify or draft a model policy supporting the recruitment and retention of state-employed women and helps employees achieve a healthy work-life balance. Subcommittee members are also reviewing academic literature and studies on flexible scheduling and telecommuting to identify best practices.
- Subcommittee members determined the subcommittee should be renamed the "Legislative and Policy Subcommittee" to better reflect the work we do surrounding agency policies. The subcommittee will ask the members to consider this name change at the next ICSEW Executive Board and General Membership meetings.

Professional Development

- Department of Agriculture representative, Mary Hougan, is the new Professional Development co-chair!
- Working on compiling a list of speakers and presenters for the ICSEW website. If you have any presenters you would like to include, please e-mail [Mary Hougan](#) or [April Karreci](#).

2010-2011 Executive Board

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Cell Phone Coordinator

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Ever Wondered Where Your Clothing Drive Donations End Up?



Our Closet
Clothing Boutique



Tacoma Rescue Mission - The Wardrobe - Salvation Army - Cinderella's Closet -
Dress for Success - Washington Women's Empolyment & Education

Save the Date!

ICSEW's next networking event will take place on

Thursday, May 19, 2011 from: 5 - 7 p.m.

Location: Ballyhoo Irish Pub & Restaurant

Watch the ICSEW [website](#) for updates!

You and Your Thyroid

Betsy Hagen, HECB ICSEW Representative

According to Oprah's favorite medical contributor, Dr. Oz, the body is an excellent communicator, and often the messages are obvious: red skin means you've had too much sun; a rumbling stomach means you're running out of fuel. But many other distress signals are less well known.

Take the thyroid gland for instance. The thyroid is located in your neck. It is a butterfly-shaped gland that lies over your windpipe near the base of your neck. I met my thyroid up close and personal this past year. As a cancer survivor of 33 years – malignant parotid cancer – time and results of radiation therapy had taken their toll on my thyroid. I was experiencing numerous symptoms of an underactive thyroid and didn't realize it. Finally, after six months of numerous tests, the decision to remove my thyroid was made.

Although the surgery was not too invasive, recuperation takes patience. You literally lie in a chair/bed for two weeks and have absolutely no energy whatsoever. You also have to take thyroid medication for the rest of your life. Your specific dosage for thyroid medication can be tricky. Blood tests and physical symptoms must be assessed every six weeks until a correct dosage is determined.

Lessons learned: If you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed below, see your doctor. Discuss the "norms" of the thyroid blood test levels. Your level may be in the normal range, but it may not be your normal range. Information

and good communication with your doctor is the key to an accurate diagnosis.

Additional information (information provided by the Mayo Clinic):

There are two main conditions: Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) and Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid).

Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) is a condition in which your thyroid gland produces too much of the hormone thyroxin. Hyperthyroidism can significantly accelerate your body's metabolism, causing sudden weight loss, a rapid or irregular heartbeat, sweating, and nervousness or irritability.

Several treatment options are available if you have hyperthyroidism. Doctors use anti-thyroid medications and radioactive iodine to slow the production of thyroid hormones. Sometimes, treatment of hyperthyroidism involves surgery to remove part of your thyroid gland. Although hyperthyroidism can be serious if you ignore it, most people respond well once hyperthyroidism is diagnosed and treated.

Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) is a condition in which your thyroid gland doesn't produce enough of certain important hormones.

Women, especially those older than age 50, are more likely to have hypothyroidism.

Hypothyroidism upsets the

normal balance of chemical reactions in your body. It seldom causes symptoms in the early stages, but, over time, untreated hypothyroidism can cause a number of health problems, such as obesity, joint pain, infertility, and heart disease.

The good news is that accurate thyroid function tests are available to diagnose hypothyroidism, and treatment of hypothyroidism with synthetic thyroid hormone is usually simple, safe and effective once the proper dosage is established.

Symptoms of Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid):

Hyperthyroidism can mimic other health problems, which may make it difficult for your doctor to diagnose. It can also cause a wide variety of signs and symptoms, including:

- Sudden weight loss, even when your appetite and diet remain normal or even increase
- Rapid heartbeat (tachycardia)—commonly more than 100 beats a minute, irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia), or pounding of your heart (palpitations)
- Increased appetite
- Nervousness, anxiety, and irritability
- Tremor — usually a fine trembling in your hands and fingers
- Sweating
- Changes in menstrual patterns
- Increased sensitivity to heat
- Changes in bowel patterns, especially more frequent bowel movements

(continued on page 10)

(Thyroid continued)

- An enlarged thyroid gland (goiter), which may appear as a swelling at the base of your neck
- Fatigue, muscle weakness
- Difficulty sleeping

Symptoms of Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid)

The signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism vary widely, depending on the severity of the hormone deficiency. But in general, any problems you do have tend to develop slowly, often over a number of years.

At first, you may barely notice the symptoms of hypothyroidism, such as fatigue and sluggishness, or you may simply attribute them to getting older. But as your

metabolism continues to slow, you may develop more obvious signs and symptoms. Hypothyroidism signs and symptom may include:

- Fatigue
- Sluggishness
- Increased sensitivity to cold
- Constipation
- Pale, dry skin
- A puffy face
- Hoarse voice
- An elevated blood cholesterol level
- Unexplained weight gain
- Muscle aches, tenderness, and stiffness
- Pain, stiffness or swelling in your joints

- Muscle weakness
- Heavier than normal menstrual periods
- Brittle fingernails and hair
- Depression

When to see a doctor

It is important to completely describe any physical or mental changes with your physician, as many signs and symptoms of thyroid issues may be associated with a number of other conditions. Schedule follow-up visits and strive for seamless communication with your doctor. Be the best health advocate for yourself! ■

Just for Fun ...

I never knew one word in the English language that can be a noun, verb, adj, adv, and a prep.

This two-letter word in English has more meanings than any other two-letter word, and that word is "UP". It is listed in the dictionary as an [adv], [prep], [adj], [n] or [v].

It's easy to understand UP, meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake UP?

At a meeting, why does a topic come UP? Why do we speak UP, and why are the officers UP for election and why is it UP to the secretary to write UP a report? We call UP our friends, brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver, warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the

kitchen. We lock UP the house and fix UP the old car.

At other times, this little word has real special meaning. People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses.

To be dressed is one thing but to be dressed UP is special.

And this UP is confusing: A drain must be opened UP because it is stopped UP.

We open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night. We seem to be pretty mixed UP about UP!

To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP, look UP the word UP in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes UP

almost 1/4 of the page and can add UP to about thirty definitions.

If you are UP to it, you might try building UP a list of the many ways UP is used. It will take UP a lot of your time, but if you don't give UP, you may wind UP with a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding UP. When the sun comes out, we say it is clearing UP. When it rains, it soaks UP the earth. When it does not rain for awhile, things dry UP. One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it UP, for now . . . my time is UP!

Now I'll shut UP!

ICSEW Members Learn Self Defense, Awareness and Emergency Communication

By Tammy Risner, Office of the State Treasurer



Sergeant Don Gulla with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission taught ICSEW members self defense, and how to recognize threats by using "Awareness Radar."

Participants learned about Emergency Communications and how to prioritize information by knowing your location, and how to give a detailed vehicle and physical description.

We practiced the "what-if game" to help mentally prepare ourselves and our families.

We discussed what happens to the human body under stress and talked about the "Fight or Flight" response. We also learned what pre-attack indicators and postures look like so we can identify potentially dangerous situations. ■



Awareness Radar

Knowing your surroundings and being aware of who, what, when, where is happening around you.

The What-if-Game

Purpose:

1. To find out what your children think,
2. To talk about possible solutions to a problem,
3. To agree on one solution that seems the best and, from that, to establish working guidelines for what you or your children would do in such a situation.

This game originates with any questions that begin with "What if..." It can be played any time, any place, and can cover any subject. By encouraging your children to talk about their thoughts, and by discussing your own reactions and ideas to a "What if..." question, you and your children can agree on a resolution, a strategy for handling it. Use role-playing or acting out the story as a way to make the game more fun and to establish the expected behavior.

What is the "fight or flight response?"

This fundamental physiologic response forms the foundation of modern day stress medicine. The "fight or flight response" is our body's primitive, automatic, inborn response that prepares the body to "fight" or "flee" from perceived attack, harm or threat to our survival.



Women Who Make A Difference: Genevieve O'Sullivan, ICSEW Chair

By Kristin Reichl, Department of Health



Genevieve O'Sullivan, ICSEW Chair

Most of you know our Women Who Make a Difference person for this issue, Genevieve (Gen) O'Sullivan. Gen has been chair of ICSEW for almost two years now. She started with ICSEW as representative for the State Auditor's Office and quickly became immersed in ICSEW as the chair of the Conference

Subcommittee and vice chair of the Committee before becoming the Chair in August 2009.

If you know Gen, you know she lives her life with no sense of boundaries in relation to her dreams. She is a born leader, an avid hobbyist in many arenas and an entrepreneur at heart.

Gen graduated from Western Washington University with a degree in political science and was a lobbyist for the student body. Her job as a communications consultant with the State Auditor's office, while right down her creative alley, seems somewhat misplaced for someone who is so unfettered. Gen recently accepted a new position with the new Redistricting Commission as a Public Outreach Coordinator.

Gen and her husband Conan's hobbies include photography and making cheese, which is quickly becoming more than just a hobby, as they are planning on pursuing commercial cheese production. Their photography hobby has also become a large part of their lives as friends, like me, keep begging them to take photographs for senior pictures, weddings and business events. Gen also loves to travel. Washington, D.C., has become a second home as she visits often to see family and friends. As a visitor she has toured many of the local museums, and has become an expert in the local

culinary arts. Just ask Gen if you ever go to D.C. and need some advice on finding the best places for pizza or cupcakes. Gen and Conan are also crazy about Ireland, which is where they were married.

Gen grew up giving back to her community. Her parents have been actively involved in the yearly "Walk and Knock" food drive in Lewis County. Every year she happily recruits people to join her in giving up a weekend day to help those in need. She has also volunteered her photography skills over the last several years to the Rescue Mission in Tacoma.

Gen's passion for women and state government has made an impact on ICSEW. Gen's leadership has resulted in a new and improved website, a more universal branding of ICSEW, increased communication with the Governor's Office, a more streamlined process for business planning and yearly reporting of Committee accomplishments, the establishment of an annual statewide employee survey, creation of two new subcommittees (Gifts and Grants and Events), initiation of monthly networking events, a much needed update of the bylaws and a decrease in Committee expenditures. And I am only naming a few.

If you are fortunate enough to have been or be a member of ICSEW under Gen's leadership, you must certainly have felt her electric enthusiasm for pushing ICSEW to new heights and accomplishments.

As Gen begins her third year as Chair of ICSEW, I know the sky will be the limit on the ideas she comes up with. She is truly a force to be reckoned with. We, as state employees, will surely enjoy the fruits of her labor long after she runs away to Hawaii and opens a surf/wine/cheese shop while regularly vacationing in Ireland. ■

IN MEMORY OF JAYME BIENDL

By Anne Williams, Department of Corrections

This article is not to talk about the tragedy that happened on January 29, 2011. It is to celebrate the life of Jayme Biendl, one of our own, a state employee and a woman who lost her life in the line of duty. Jayme Biendl was acknowledged as a very hard worker who took satisfaction from doing a good job. She started work at Monroe Correctional Complex as an officer in July 2003 and moved on to become Chapel Officer in 2005.

Many of the staff commented on how she took pride in her work; she was a fair and just officer to both inmates and her fellow co-workers. I always appreciated the quiet demeanor she displayed as she walked through the prison and when she did her work. When I asked staff about one thing they would want others to remember about Jayme, most said she was dedicated to her job. She always did her best. She made it the best work environment through positive interactions. Volunteer Chaplain Thaler-Sanborn said, "Jayme represented the epitome of firm, fair, and consistent. She was always in control of her circumstances and never once did I hear her raise her voice."

Officer Lolinda White said, "When I came to work for DOC, I found most of the women who worked on line were very guarded when it came to being friendly



towards other women. Being this was my first career move that brought me in the midst of so many strong and outstanding women, I had a very difficult time understanding why it was so hard to strike up friendships. Jayme was the first woman who grabbed me up as a friend and helped me navigate some of the issues of a correctional environment. She would make me laugh when I would feel like crying. She showed me how to be strong and soft at the same time. She would never pass up the chance to help me when I called. I will miss her very much."

A true professional is a person who is able to balance their personal life with their professional life and Jayme did it quite well. She had a special interest in cooking and loved to try new recipes. Her family said she loved holidays, especially being in the role of hostess. While at work, she was quiet and moved through the prison with a purpose. At home, she was a talker and would spend quality time with her sisters, catching up on local gossip.

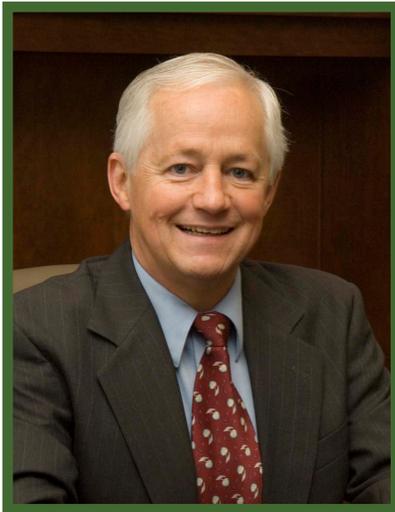
My last memory of Jayme was in the Chapel. After an event I sponsored, I thanked her for her help and she smiled and said, "Thank you, I enjoyed it." Jayme will always be remembered not only by staff at Monroe Correctional Complex but by all state employees. ■

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.

~Flavia Weedn, Forever, © Flavia.com

Agency in the Spotlight - Office of the Insurance Commissioner

By Amy Teshera, Office of the Insurance Commissioner



Mike Kreidler, Insurance Commissioner

We protect consumers, the public interest, and our state's economy through fair and efficient regulation of the insurance industry.

The first state legislature created the Office of the Insurance Commissioner during the 1889-1890 session. At first, we were part of the Secretary of State's Office and our main function was simply to register insurance companies that wanted to do business in Washington.

In 1907, we became a separate agency and the people of Washington elected their first insurance commissioner, John H. Shively(R) who served from 1909 – 1913. Commissioners are elected every four years.

Mike Kreidler is the eighth insurance commissioner for the state of Washington. He is currently serving his third term in office.

The Insurance Commissioner's Office oversees the insurance industry to make sure companies follow the rules and that Washington consumers get what they pay for.

Unlike most state agencies, we are not funded by public tax dollars. Insurance

companies pay an administrative fee to cover all of our costs.

With about 200 employees, we are one of the smaller state agencies, but we cover a lot of ground:

Our primary mission is consumer protection. We do this through three "core" divisions:

• **Company Supervision**

- License all insurance companies doing business in Washington (2,243)
- Work to ensure companies are financially solvent
- Oversee financial and market activity

• **Rates & Forms**

- Review and approve rates (premiums)
- Review and ensure insurance contracts comply with state law

• **Consumer Protection**

- Advocate on behalf of the insurance-buying public
- License 116,000 agents/brokers doing business in Washington
- Investigate agent/broker conduct

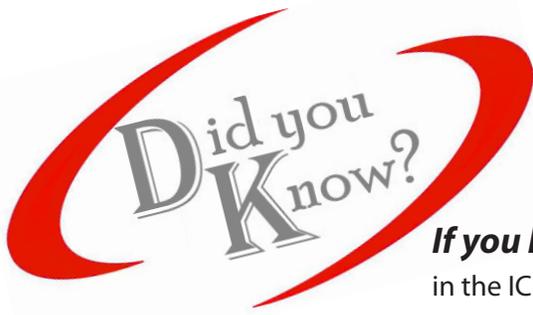
We also offer an **Insurance Consumer Hotline: 1-800-562-6900**

- A toll-free hotline for consumers who feel they were treated unfairly by their insurance company.
- A live person answers every call and will either answer your question or put you in contact with one of our insurance experts.
- Respond to more than 150,000 consumer inquiries per year.

- Investigated 5,500 formal complaints in 2009.
- Recovered \$53 million for consumers in the past four years.

In addition, we have the **Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) Helpline**

- Offers free, confidential, impartial health insurance counseling and education (including about Medicare's Prescription Drug Program)
- SHIBA relies on 300 trained volunteers. The program is partially funded by federal grants
- Individuals counsel over 30,000 consumers each year.
- The Office of the Insurance Commissioner is the second largest contributor to the State General Fund (behind Dept. of Revenue), collecting \$937 million per biennium for the state's general operating budget and helping fund the Basic Health Plan. Want to learn more about the Office of the Insurance Commissioner and our services?
- Go [online](#)
- [Read our WA](#)
- Follow our [consumer updates](#)
- Get our [news releases and updates on new laws](#) ■



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Note: Submission deadlines and writing guidelines are available on our website.

Don't forget to recycle your old cell phone with battery charger and cords to the ICSEW's on-going cell phone drive. For further information contact:

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