



Scott & DiAnna Brannan

10638 SE 236th Street Kent WA 98031
chnow@msn.com | www.chnow.org

Legislative Update from the Christian Homeschool Network (February 9, 2010) Part 1 of 3

We are half way through the Washington State 2010 legislative session. This is a sixty day session which began on January 11th and is scheduled to end on March 11th. Short sessions can be very interesting. Sometimes they are advantageous as they can be too short to get legislation passed. However, short sessions can also prove to be dangerous. Bad legislation can move quickly and undetected before it is too late to react.

CHN Organization Overview

The Christian Homeschool Network (CHN) is the legislative liaison to Christian Heritage Home Educators of Washington (CHRISTIAN HERITAGE) and the state liaison to Home School Legal Defense Association. Since its beginning in 2004 as a statewide, grassroots homeschooling lobbying organization, founders Scott and DiAnna Brannan have carried out most of the lobbying efforts. CHN is the only Washington State homeschool organization with a registered lobbyist in Olympia, and DiAnna Brannan is its official registered, unpaid lobbyist.

While CHN works in many capacities, this newsletter will focus on our legislative lobbying efforts. We will explain the function of a lobbyist, ways to get involved, dates of upcoming events, a legislative review and some important policies.

Why Do We Need a Lobbyist?

As many of you know, non-profit organizations are limited in what they can do legislatively. Since CHN is a lobbying organization, with a registered lobbyist, we do not have these limitations. Therefore, CHN has much freedom in representing the interest of home education legislatively.

Only a lobbyist:

- Can write and submit proposed legislation.
- Can directly influence legislation in ways not open to the general public.
- Is seen by legislators as a legislative liaison, giving them more credibility than most “concerned citizens or groups”.
- Is seen as an expert on the issues or group they represent and therefore is a key witness for testimony at hearings.

What does a lobbyist do?

One of the most important functions of a lobbyist is to be a liaison to the legislature, representing their group’s issues, introduce legislation, monitor bills, and interceding when needed to amend proposed legislation. There were approximately 4100 bills introduced this session, so this required a lot of monitoring.

Other things a lobbyist does:

- Plans legislative events, such as CHN’s Lobbying Days, Home Educators’ Day at the Capitol Event hosted by CHN and CHRISTIAN HERITAGE
- Prepares and coordinate hearings; provide talking points, testimonies, expert witnesses, etc.
- Coordinates with stakeholders on key legislative issues
- Negotiates with opponents to legislation
- Assists constituents/groups when visiting Olympia
- Provides handouts to legislators
- Prepares talking points on legislation
- Builds alliances with other like-minded groups

Another important function of a lobbyist is to build relationships with key people, especially legislators. In the past seven years we have worked on many different issues and have had the privilege to work with several legislators. We are grateful that this has won many over to our cause and exposed them to CHN so that they now look to us for expertise in homeschooling issues. In an emergency these will be very critical relationships.

We also work diligently with agencies, special interest groups, and lobbyists to make sure legislation we are working on reflects the interest of our group. Through these efforts, the Lord has allowed CHN to build a good reputation in Olympia. For example, lobbyist DiAnna and her daughter were introduced to and enthusiastically received by one of the House caucuses. We are very thankful for this and for their show of support for home education.

In our legislative update section, you will see that CHN detected potentially harmful mistakes in the wording of a few bills. We were thankfully able to work with legislators to correct these, therefore avoiding unnecessary conflict and flooding you with e-alerts. It is only when we cannot resolve an issue that we send out e-alerts.

We are very grateful to those of you who are continually ready to make calls, write, or even make trips to Olympia in support of home education. We value your time and resources so we work extra hard to do all that is necessary before we alert you to respond on issues. Your diligence in responding to our e-alerts has helped CHN gain the credibility it enjoys in Olympia.

Meet with Your Lobbyist:

We want to encourage you to get in contact with DiAnna when visiting Olympia during the legislative session. She would be glad to assist you and give you an update on the issues. You can also contact her if you are planning a meeting with your legislator in-district and would like some assistance. You can e-mail her at chnow@msn.com

To prepare for a meeting with your legislator, please carefully read CHN's legislative platform at: <http://www.chnow.org/page37.aspx> If the issue is not on our platform, there may be a good reason why. For any questions, contact us at chnow@msn.com.

Issue of concern:

Often when visiting legislators, home educators tend to identify non-homeschool issues as an issue homeschoolers are concerned with. This is very confusing to legislators and also builds resentment to home education. While there is nothing wrong with talking with your legislators about pro-life, levy, or tax issues, these are not directly homeschool issues and should not be treated as such. Rather, approach these issues as a concerned voter, parent, citizen, etc., not as a home educator.

We have just described another function of a lobbyist: Come up with legislative strategy. This includes what to say and what not to say when working legislation. In addition, many times CHN will provide talking points or position papers on bills. This will assist home educators on what points are the key points on a bill when writing, testifying, or talking to legislators.

Also, there are some issues that we and other non-homeschool groups support or oppose, and we may have joined forces with them. To provide clarity and not create confusion, we will sometimes say "it is not necessary to identify yourself as a home educator" in our communications. We do this because this helps to broaden the influence for support or defeat of the bill and does not bring in other unrelated issues, such as homeschooling.

Legislative Update

HB 2421 An act allowing for Third Party Visitation—Bill is dead

This bill would enact a new section in Washington law that would allow any person to petition a court for visitation rights with a child if they have "established an ongoing and substantial relationship with the child."

CHN opposed this bill because it is unconstitutional and undermines parental rights. Third party visitation rights have already been challenged and overturned by the 2000 US Supreme Court in the case of Troxel v.

Granville. The court reaffirmed the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment which protects the fundamental right of parents to make decisions concerning the care, custody, and control of their children

There were five grandparent visitation bills activated from last session. Supporters of these bills put all of their efforts into HB2421. We still kept an eye on these bills but knew there was a good chance they would not be going anywhere.

Bills that accidentally included home-based instruction or left home-based instruction out

CHN worked on three bills to correct these oversights. SB6620 would have amended the home-based instruction law, which was unnecessary. We had the bill amended to have this language taken out. SB 6252 and HB2513 defined education as public and private school, leaving out home-based instruction. We worked to have this corrected. The bill was amended.

While these appear to be minor changes, we worked hard to amend these bills knowing that the exclusion (or, in some cases, inclusion) of homeschooling in the wording could lead to major negative repercussions in the future. CHN testified at two hearings and attended a third, met with key people, and followed up with them to make sure these bills were correction.

For more legislative highlights, see our legislative web page <http://www.chnow.org/page69.aspx>.

Day at the Capitol & Celebration Under the Dome Event

Thursday February 25

9:00am -3:30 pm

<http://www.chnow.org/page28.aspx>

Hear from some of the top conservative legislators on how to change the current political climate, a vision for change, how we get there, the fundamental principles of a conservative, and staying free from government strings. Hear words of encouragement from Christian Homeschool Network and Christian Heritage Home Educator board members.

- Get educated on the legislative process, tour the capitol, attend the civics workshop and hear from state homeschool leaders who will encourage you on your home education journey.
- Get an update from our registered lobbyist, DiAnna Brannan, CHN
- Meet with your legislators and build support for home education by giving them a “face” to put on home education issues.
- Present a unified front with the legislature.

Apple Pie Surprise for Legislators

Last year we blessed many legislators with our “apple pie surprise”. We are planning to do so again. Many legislators and staff are eagerly awaiting their pies. Please sign up online today.

<http://saintevents.com/pieregistration.asp>

Ways You Can Get Involved

Thank you to the many of you who receive and responded to our legislative e-alerts. We also greatly appreciate those who support us financially. Remember: Every penny goes to resources needed to support the work of CHN.

However, we need more of you to get involved. So please forward this information on to others or make copies and distribute to other home educators at your church, support group, co-op, etc.

Sign up for CHN Alerts & Join Today!

Sign-up for CHN's legislative e-alert: http://www.chnow.org/newsite/about_us/why_signup_test.html

And join CHN or make a donation: <http://www.chnow.org/page44.aspx>

Some Important CHN Policies

CHN does not endorse any organizations except Christian Heritage Home Educators, which CHN serves as legislative liaison.

As we have done in the past, CHN always coordinates major issues with the state homeschool organizations, Christian Heritage Home Educators, Home School Legal Defense Association and Washington Homeschool Organization. As a lobbying organization, it is standard procedure, to coordinate with the major stakeholders when working legislation.

The legislative session cutoff calendar requires bills to meet certain deadlines. *However, it is CHN's policy that no bills are actually dead until the end of the legislative session.* It is our experience that loopholes can be found to move bills past some of these deadlines, when there is the availability and desire to do so.

The freedoms to home educate our children now and in the future are indeed very high stakes. Most lobbyists would not understand this, nor have as much to lose. This is why we feel very strongly that our lobbyist must be a home educator. DiAnna has a lot of experience in Olympia and has home educated her children (the Brannan children are ages 20 & 17) from the beginning. DiAnna is registered as a volunteer lobbyist. She is not compensated for her work and when funds are available she is reimbursed for mileage and parking.

We would love to hear from you. So please feel free to e-mail us any suggestions you may have for future newsletters.

CHN ... Your Homeschooling Voice in Olympia!