Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles Elected Vice Chair of Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Boulder, Colorado – Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles, D-Seattle, on Nov. 11 was elected the vice chair of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) during the commission’s semi-annual meeting held in Denver. One of four regional higher education compacts in the U.S., WICHE (www.wiche.edu) and its 15 member states and U.S. territory work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. Governors of the member states and territory appoint three commissioners per state to this regional governing body.

By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life. As the only organization in the West that focuses exclusively on higher education issues, from access and accountability to tuition and fees to online learning and innovation, WICHE strives to find answers to solve some of the most critical questions facing higher education today. WICHE’s public policy research and collaborative programs support the West’s citizens and its constantly evolving cultures. WICHE’s members include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Northern Marianas Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate).

Sen. Kohl-Wells has served on the WICHE Commission since 2006. She also represents Washington on the WICHE regional Legislative Advisory Committee, and has served on this committee since 2005. The two other appointed commissioners representing Washington are Don Bennett, deputy director of the Washington Student Achievement Council, and State Representative Larry Seaquist of Gig Harbor.

Sen. Kohl-Welles, has represented the 36th Legislative District in the Senate since 1994 after serving for three years in the state House of Representatives where she was Majority Whip. In addition to her position as ranking member of the Senate Higher Education Committee, she sits on the Senate Ways & Means, Rules, and Commerce and Labor committees. She is the secretary, and past chair, of the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee, chairs the Joint Legislative Systems Committee and is a member of the Joint Higher Education Committee, co-chair of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy Board, Washington State Arts Commission, Public Stadium Authority Advisory Committee, and the Maritime Industries Joint Legislative Task Force. She also represents Washington on the Education Committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures and on the Committee on Advanced Tuition Payment. Sen. Kohl-Welles is also a member of the University of Washington Women’s Center Anti-Trafficking Task Force and, most recently, was named to the Statewide Coordinating Committee on Sex Trafficking and the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Statewide Coordinating Committee.

For more information regarding Sen. Kohl-Welles, please contact: Adam Cooper, legislative assistant, 206-216-3182, or Clare DeLong, communication specialist, (360) 786-7887. For more information regarding WICHE, contact Jere Mock, vice president of programs and services, 303-541-0222.