

MEDIA RELEASE

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

Boulder, Colorado – Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles, D-Seattle, on Nov. 3 was elected the chair of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) during the commission's semi-annual meeting held in Boulder. 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, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the first of the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states to participate).

Sen. Kohl-Welles has served on the WICHE Commission since 2006. During the past year she has served as the commission's vice chair and previously she chaired the commission's Issue Analysis and Research Committee. The other appointed commissioners representing Washington are Don Bennett, deputy director of the Washington Student Achievement Council, and State Representative Gerry Pollet of Seattle (appointment pending). Sen. Kohl-Welles and Rep. Pollet also represent Washington on the WICHE regional Legislative Advisory Committee along with Sen. Barbara Bailey; Kohl-Welles has served on this committee since 2005.

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. In addition to her position as ranking member of the Senate Higher Education Committee, she sits on the Senate Ways & Means, and Law & Justice committees. She was past chair and secretary of the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee, chaired 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 the Statewide Coordinating Committee on Sex Trafficking and the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Statewide Coordinating Committee. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology of Education and an M.A. in Sociology from the University of California Los Angeles and a B.A. and M.A. in Education from California State University Northridge.

Sen. Kohl-Welles will assume a new position on January 1 as King County Councilmember District 4. She intends to work on expanding the county's involvement in higher education issues. King County is one of the fastest growing local governments in the country, with over two million residents. It is the 13th largest county and is larger than 12 states population-wise.

For more information regarding Sen. Kohl-Welles, contact: Adam Cooper, legislative assistant, 206-216-3182, or Jon Fowler, Senate communication specialist, 360-786-7535. For more information on WICHE, contact Jere Mock, 303-541-0222.

