

To:

Governor Chris Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

From:

Jennifer Nielsen

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January 1, 2008

Hello Governor Gregoire,

My goal in writing is to encourage you to keep the Port Townsend to Seattle passenger ferry in service after January 6, 2008. Personal and professional reasons motivated me to write this letter, my first to you or any governor of Washington. Living here for most of my life, I have benefited from a great education at Washington state schools from the 2nd grade through two bachelor degrees from EWU. I have raised three lovely daughters, one who is in her senior year at UW in Seattle. My teaching career of 16 years has been spent in Washington state public middle and high schools. I am devoted to this beautiful state and all it has to offer and keeping the PT – Seattle ferry would add to the list of great things about living in Washington.

On December 23, 2007 I rode the ferry from Port Townsend to Seattle with my youngest daughter, Cecelia. We met my middle daughter, Hillary, saw her new apartment on Capital Hill, went to lunch on Broadway, took the bus back to the ferry and rode home to PT. The total cost for transportation was \$21.30 for all three of us. The same trip without the benefit of this ferry service would have cost over \$46.00, including the gas required to drive to Bainbridge and from pier 52 to Capital Hill and back and the ferry cost for car, driver and passengers. If I had parked my car in Bainbridge the cost would have been as much if not more. Having this ferry service saved us money and time, as well as peace of mind. Driving in Seattle has never been

my favorite activity and, with this ferry service, I am saved the stress and worry of dealing with traffic.

Besides the cost savings and convenience, the benefit to our fabulously clear Washington air is evident. During a recent visit to Port Townsend for our annual film festival, actor Elliot Gould mentioned the freshness of the air and the beauty of our community. During a visit to our high school, he expressed his admiration for our natural environment and said that it was, "...something worth fighting for." Sometimes it takes an outsider who has become adjusted to the smog of LA to remind us of what we might take for granted. The passenger ferry is one way we can continue to support our relatively smog free state.

At Port Townsend High School I teach English and drama and I direct the school plays. In recent years we have done such shows as Anything Goes, The Skin of Our Teeth, Grease, and Noises Off with great success. Part of our success is dependent upon our close proximity to the lively arts community in Seattle. I take groups of students, from 10 – 50, to Seattle at least three times a year to see professional productions and participate in workshops. One great opportunity we have enjoyed in the past is the 5th Avenue Theater's first-Friday program. The students pay a fee of \$20.00 and get to participate in a workshop, have dinner with some of the production staff, see the current show and talk with the performers afterward. These trips are expensive when we have to hire a bus and driver and travel to Kingston or Bainbridge. Having the passenger ferry right here in downtown PT would eliminate this cost, saving our drama department and school hundreds of dollars a year. It is quite possible, if this service were permanent, that I would plan more trips for the students.

Last year we also participated in the 5th Avenue Theater's High School Musical Awards program. They sent three judges to different performances of Anything Goes and we were evaluated along with over 50 other school, mostly from the Seattle area, in categories such as costume and set design, acting, musical direction and choreography. We received five nominations or honorable mentions and attended the awards ceremony in June. We also benefited from an in-depth evaluation from each judge. The point of this story is that all of these steps would have been aided by a passenger ferry between our two cities. The judges trip to see our show and our trip to the theater would have cost less and been much more convenient for all.

In addition, some of my more dedicated students last year chose to take advantage of the 5th Avenue's weekend dance classes for teens. The transportation for these eight students was always troublesome. A ferry from here to downtown Seattle would have solved these problems. In fact, this year I haven't even offered this to my students because of the hassle of last year. It is just too hard to manage the car-pooling issues.

As a family we would continue to use the ferry to Seattle to stay connected. As a professional, I would continue and possibly increase my students' exposure to Seattle's fantastic theater arts world. Our community and state, but more importantly, the citizens of this great state would all benefit.

Please consider making the Port Townsend to Seattle passenger ferry service permanent.

Thank-you for your consideration. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,