



**News Release**  
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## **Teens Planning Take Over of Capitol**

*YMCA Youth & Government Presents the 61st session of the Youth Legislature,*

**OLYMPIA, Wa.** – After the gavel smashes in Olympia next week, it will be the state’s teenagers, not elected officials, cutting deals in the halls of the state legislature. The regular session has adjourned and a new generation of leaders is moving in; the YMCA’s 61st Youth Legislature.

More than 425 teenagers from 30 school and youth delegations across Washington will descend upon the state capitol from April 30<sup>th</sup>-May 3<sup>rd</sup> proposing bills in House and Senate Chambers, debating current issues, and passing legislation that will become permanent record. Youth Legislature is part of the YMCA’s Youth & Government Program.

“Youth Legislature teaches teenagers about our legislative practices and how to make it their own,” said Erik Ashida, the YMCA’s 61st Youth Governor and a senior at Lakeside High School in Seattle, Wa. “It’s a high energy, fast paced environment designed to teach students about our country’s democratic traditions in a fun and dynamic way.”

Youth & Government participants research public policy issues, write bills and practice public speaking all year in preparation for this immersion experience in politics.

Approximately 375 bills will be introduced this session. These include serious topics such as, improving the curriculum in Washington schools, the war in Iraq, restructuring the election process, and some with a much lighter fare like introducing the Salmon Spawning Dance as the official state dance and making it mandatory that all elected officials pass the WASL prior to their being able to announce their candidacy for office. By the end of day four, hundreds of bills will have been debated, many will be signed into youth law, a heated election process will produce a new governor and executive staff, and all will go away with a stronger appreciation of state politics and current issues.

Notable alumni of YMCA Youth & Government include: Senator Betti Sheldon, Washington State Senate (retired); Dr. Douglas D. Osheroff, Nobel Prize Winner in Physics 1996, Professor at Stanford University; H. Stuart Elway, Elway Research; Pam Curtis Bjornsen, Pam Curtis & Associates Consulting, OHSU Center for Evidence Based Research; Jim Bricker, Government Affairs, PEMCO Financial Services; The Honorable Robert F. Utter, Supreme Court Justice (retired); Mike Egan, Director External Corporate Affairs, Microsoft; The Honorable Daniel J. Berschauer, Thurston County Superior Court; Jeanne Cushman, Attorney, Partner CushmanGale, LLC; Patrick McDonald, Assistant to Washington State Secretary of State; Susan West, Reporter, Fox News 13, Mark Tabbutt, President, SaltChuk Resources; Bob Wolfe, Managing Partner, Northwest Venture Associates; Dave Quall, Washington State House of Representatives, Chair Education Committee; and Mike Armstrong, Washington State House of Representatives.

Highlights of the session include the following:

## **61<sup>st</sup> Session Program Schedule:**

	<b><u>Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup></u></b>	
<b>Time</b>		<b>Location</b>
9:30-10:30 am	Registration	Senate Majority Caucus Rm
11:00-noon	Pictures with the Governors	Rotunda
Noon-1:00	Lunch on your own	
1:45-4:15	Legislative Committees in Session	See Committee Assignments
4:30-5:30	Rules Committee	O'Brien Hearing Room A
4:30-5:15	Delegation Meetings	Delegations designate area
5:15-6:30	State Reception	SE Terrace
5:30-6:15	Governor's Cabinet Reception	State Reception Room
6:30-7:00	House & Senate Organizational Sessions	House/Senate Chambers
7:00-8:15	Opening Joint Session	House Chambers
8:15	Return to Host Homes/Hotels	

	<b><u>Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup></u></b>	
<b>Time</b>		<b>Location</b>
9:00-11:30 am	First Regular Session 8 <sup>th</sup> Group A paging	
11:30-1:00	Lunch on your own CONA Delegation Meeting	Senate Majority Caucus Rm.
1:00-3:30	First regular session continued	
3:45-4:45	Candidate Speeches	House Chambers
4:45-6:45	Dinner with your delegation	
6:45-8:45	First Regular session continued	
8:45	Return to Host Homes/Hotels	

	<b><u>Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup></u></b>	
<b>Time</b>		<b>Location</b>
9:00-11:30 am	Second regular session 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Group B paging	
10:00-4:00	Election for 2009 Major Officers	Cherberg Conference Room
11:30-1:00	Lunch on your own Program Committee Meeting	Senate Majority Caucus Rm.
1:00-4:30	Second regular session continued	
2:00-2:30	Governor's Press Conference	Senate Rules Room
4:30-8:00	Dinner with host families	
8:00-11:00	Youth Governor's Ball	Rotunda
11:00	Return to Host Homes/Hotels	

	<b><u>Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup></u></b>	
<b>Time</b>		<b>Location</b>
9:00-11:00 am	Third regular session	
11:30-12:30	Closing Joint Session	House Chambers
12:30	<b>Adjournment of the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the YMCA Youth Legislature</b>	

### **About YMCA Youth & Government**

For over 61 years, Washington YMCA Youth & Government has been helping young people experience democracy in action through two highly successful programs: Youth Legislature and Mock Trial. Each year over 1,000 teenagers gain a deep understanding of our democratic traditions, their importance, and how to sustain them by their active participation in these Youth & Government programs.

### **About Youth Legislature**

Founded in 1947, the YMCA Youth Legislature provides students the opportunity to experience the democratic process firsthand. Throughout the year, participants learn how to research public policy issues, write real legislation, practice public speaking and debating skills, and work together to achieve a goal. Assuming the roles of Senator, Representative, Lobbyist, and Press, the Youth Legislature meets in a four-day legislative session presided over by their statewide elected youth officials, including a Governor, Secretary of State, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House.

### **About Mock Trial**

The YMCA Mock Trial program allows students to participate in a "true-to-life" courtroom drama. Each team of attorneys and witnesses prepares the case for trial before a real judge in an actual courtroom. A "jury" of attorney raters scores teams for their presentation while the presiding judge rules on the motions, objections, and ultimately the merits. Participants develop critical thinking and analytical skills, learn the art of oral advocacy, and gain a respect for the role of law and the judiciary. The district winning teams compete for the State Championship in Olympia in March and the state championship team moves on to represent Washington at the National Mock Trial Competition.

\*\*\*\* **TVW**, the statewide cable TV network that televises the Washington State Legislature and State Supreme Court, will provide LIVE television coverage of the YMCA Youth Legislature and show repeat coverage following the event. For those without cable TV, the youth legislature can be viewed LIVE in web video at [www.tvw.org](http://www.tvw.org), as well as on-demand after the event.

For more information about YMCA Youth & Government, please visit [www.youthandgovernment.org](http://www.youthandgovernment.org).

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