



Washington State Bar Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 21, 2012

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Senator Debbie Regala Receives 2012 Outstanding Elected Official Award

(SEATTLE) — The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) has chosen retiring State Senator **Debbie Regala** for its 2012 Outstanding Elected Official Award. This award is presented to an elected official for outstanding service, with special contributions to the legal profession. It is awarded to an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to justice beyond the usual call of duty. WSBA President **Stephen Crossland** presented the award at the WSBA Annual Awards Dinner on Sept. 20, 2012, at the Hyatt at Olive 8 in Seattle.

Regala is being recognized for her career-long commitment to championing individual rights, access to criminal defense and civil legal aid, fair and equal application of the law, and state funding to support all levels of the courts.

“The Washington State Bar Association is honored to present the Outstanding Elected Official Award to Senator Regala in recognition of her many years of tireless service as a lawmaker and public servant, and to express our appreciation for her dedicated pursuit of justice for all citizens of this state,” said Crossland. “While she is rightly known as a champion of children’s rights, we would also like to recognize her extraordinary efforts throughout her career to improve a broad range of civil and criminal laws.”

Regala serves the 27th Legislative District, which includes several areas of Tacoma. She served in the House of Representatives from 1994–2000. She was elected to the State Senate in 2000, serving as the assistant Democratic floor leader in 2003 and the majority whip from 2005–09. Regala is vice chair of

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the Human Services and Corrections Committee, vice chair of the Judiciary Committee, and serves on the Ways and Means and Rules committees. She also serves on the Legislative Ethics Board, the Council for Children and Families, the Correctional Industries Board, and the Office of Public Defense Advisory Board.

“Senator Regala works diligently at every step of the process to get important reforms passed and implemented,” said **James Bamberger**, director of the Office of Civil Legal Aid. “She leads with dignity and respect for all, regardless of their viewpoints, and has had the courage to take on tough issues and issues that are not well understood by the public. Senator Regala has had a tremendously positive impact on Washington's legal system and on ensuring fairness and justice for all.”

In 2005, Regala was an early supporter of the “Justice in Jeopardy” initiative, which infused new funding to all levels of courts, civil legal aid, criminal public defense, and parents’ representation in dependency cases. In 2007, she began a multi-year effort to address the state’s lack of rehabilitation services for prison inmates, co-chairing a statewide task force focused on problems faced by offenders coming out of prison and co-sponsoring legislation to improve released offenders’ opportunities to succeed in society. In 2008, she shepherded passage of the bill that reauthorized the state Office of Public Defense, allowing Washington’s public defense improvement programs to continue uninterrupted. In 2011, she sponsored legislation to allow juvenile sex offenders who maintain a clean record to seal their records, allowing them to move beyond a juvenile conviction and create productive adult lives. In 2012, she co-sponsored and worked passionately for the passage of the Marriage Equality Act.

“Senator Regala has...shepherded many bills to improve the justice system over the years,” said Washington State Supreme Court Chief Justice **Barbara A. Madsen**. “Her attention to issues of due process and fairness has resulted in important reforms benefitting low-income, disabled, and youthful Washington residents. Many lives have been changed for the better as a result of Senator Regala.”

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA is part of the judicial branch, exercising a governmental function authorized by the Washington State Supreme Court to license the state’s 34,800 lawyers. The WSBA both regulates lawyers under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA’s mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice.

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