

Senator Pam Roach Heads Hearing To Shine Light On CPS Abuse

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : April 21, 2009 at 5:10 am

Auburn—Sen. Pam Roach (R-rural Auburn) acted as Chairwoman for a legislative hearing last Thursday to investigate abuse and corruption by the Department of Social and Health Services. Rep. Joel Kretz (R-Wauconda) and Rep. Marilyn Chase (D — Shoreline) acted as co-chairs for the hearing and several other legislators were in attendance. The hearing was a forum for legislators to hear from professionals in the field and families who are victims of the department. Tim Rasmussen, the elected Prosecuting Attorney for Stevens County, was in attendance to testify as to his experience investigating CPS in Stevens County. He stated, "Based on what I have learned, it is my opinion that there is a culture of deceit and deception that is rampant in the Colville CPS office. The system is broken. The children are forgotten." Mr. Rasmussen has been investigating CPS in Stevens County for some time and has uncovered corruption and outright violation of the statutes and regulations that have been enacted to protect children and families.

Senator Roach echoed Mr. Rasmussen's findings at the hearing. "I will be encouraging prosecutors from around the state to follow Mr. Rasmussen's lead," Roach said. "The abuses by the department are not exclusive to Colville. We must uncover the corruption and abuse in every county in the state and hold the department accountable when they don't follow the law." "It is time the citizens of Washington stand up against the atrocities of this department," said Roach. "There are so many horrific stories that show CPS separating children from good families. On the other hand, they often leave children in harm's way." Sharonda Amamilo, an attorney who represents parents in dependency actions in Thurston County, informed the legislators present that corruption in the department and a failure to follow the statutes occurs in Thurston County just as it does in Stevens County. There were others in attendance that told stories of the department's refusal to place children with relatives and brought light to system wide problems in the way the department handles these cases. Patricia Markel, the CASA director for Stevens County, was also present at the hearing and reiterated Prosecutor Rasmussen's findings of corruption and lack of accountability in the Colville CPS office. This hearing took place on the heels of Senator Roach's 11 month effort to return the granddaughter of Doug and AnneMarie Stuth to their home in Enumclaw. (Please see: KING 5, "Up Front," January 11, 2009. Investigative reporter, Susannah Frame, covers this story.) "My efforts to bring accountability to this broken system will not stop here," Roach said. "I will be proposing legislation to break DSHS into smaller agencies to increase accountability and efficiency as well as legislation creating a Citizens Review Committee of CPS."