

Washington State University
John McCoy

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WSU Students Meet Native Legislator, John McCoy

By Emma Noyes & Faith Price

Washington State House Representative John McCoy visited the WSU campus November 4th and 5th and met with students, staff, and faculty for a dinner hosted by WSU Native Programs, and a lunch hosted jointly by Multicultural Student Services and WSU Native Programs.

McCoy, a Tulalip tribal member, shared insight into the legislative process from his 10 years representing the 38th legislative district in the Washington State House of Representatives. The 38th district covers Everett, Marysville, Tulalip and neighborhoods of Snohomish County.

McCoy offered the following advice to WSU students: Number one,

listen. Listen not only to an individual's words, but to where they are coming from. Number two, learn something new every day. This is something Rep. McCoy continues to do. Number three, be willing to adjust and to compromise when needed. He relates this last piece of advice to times when he has had to "kill" his own bills.

McCoy chairs the House "Community Development, Housing, and Tribal Affairs Committee", and also has a seat on the House "Education Committee." He has been a strong supporter of Indian education, and sponsored a bill to incorporate tribal history into K-12 education in the state of Washington. That bill became law in 2005.

"I myself did not go to college," McCoy shared with WSU students. "All my knowledge is street smarts. When I felt I needed a skill updated I went to community college."

McCoy spent 20 years in the United States Air Force, specializing in computer operations and programming. He worked as a computer technician in the White House for several years after retiring from the military, and before going into the private sector. The technologically-skilled McCoy shared that he worked on one government project with far-reaching effects for all Americans – the creation of the Internet.

The Internet is just one example of the good that government can do, said McCoy. He encouraged students to get involved in politics, voicing frustration with the perception that government is "bad." McCoy stated that he sees a disconnect in people who hate government, but say "don't touch my Medicare or Social Security" – two government-funded programs.

One piece of legislation Washington students may be interested in is a "Pay It Forward" approach to higher education. Legislators in Olympia are currently exploring a concept that recently passed in Oregon, that would allow students to go to college for free, and when they leave pay back a set percentage based on their income. McCoy told the group, that Representative Larry Seaquist is hoping to introduce this as a bill in the state of Washington this year.



Representative John McCoy discusses his experience as a state legislator with WSU students in the Plateau Center November 4.

