

"All the Truth
That's Fit to Print"

Legal News & Information for Modern Consumers

Spring 2006

"Before shooting, one must aim." -African Proverb

Hello again, and welcome to this latest newsletter edition!

It was good to put this past election behind us, and thankfully Washington voters soundly re-



jected I-330. That initiative put an arbitrary value of \$350,000 on human life and also revoked one's constitutional right to a trial by jury in medical malpractice claims. As an attorney, it was odd to see a smear campaign against lawyers openly aired on T.V. One pro I-330 campaign piece showed lawyers in a conference room passing wads of cash between each other and stashing them in their suit pockets. Believe it or not, that's something I've never witnessed during my 20 years of practicing law! Despite the villainization of attorneys, it was comforting to know that Washington voters stood up for their rights and overcame a nine million

dollar full court press by the insurance industry.

Vulnerable Adults Scored with the Rejection of I-330

One right that would have been affected with the passage of I-330 concerned Washington's abuse of vulnerable adults' statute, RCW 74.34. That stat-



ute protects frail elders and vulnerable adults who are subjected to abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment while residing in long-term care facilities or at home under the care of a home health, hospice or home care agency. A key provision of the statute awards attorney's fees to vulnerable adults who win their

cases. The award of attorney's fees makes small and difficult cases more attractive to attorneys, thereby giving our most fragile and helpless citizens greater access to legal representation and the means to redress their grievances.

I-330 would have gutted the attorney's fees provision and shoved our elders even further into the closet. With an aging population and elder abuse claims on the rise, more protection, not less, should be our mantra.

At What Age Can You Safely Leave Your Child Alone at Home?

On the other end of life's spectrum are our children, who are also vulnerable. When can our kids be left home alone (at least with no legal repercussions or screenplays generated)? No clear answer was evident when reviewing our state laws. In fact, only two States, Illinois and Maryland, have specific legislation addressing this issue--they prohibit kids being left alone who are under the ages of 14 and 13 respectively. These laws were a shock to me since my 7 year old daughter is generally babysat or 14!



Washington does not have a clear law governing when kids can be left home alone, but Child Protective Services tells parents no child un-



SELANDER – O'BRIEN

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
323 FIRST AVENUE WEST
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98119

WE APPRECIATE YOUR
REFERRAL OF PERSONAL
INJURY CASES!

Seattle Office:

PHONE: (206) 282-0717

FAX: (206) 282-3870

Bellevue Office:

Phone: (425) 455-6785

Throughout Washington State:

(800) 734-0404

WWW.PERSONALINJURYWASHINGTON.COM

E-MAIL: ken@selanderobrien.com

jeannie@selanderobrien.com

If you received this message in error or would like to be added to our mailing list, please forward your request to ken@selanderobrien.com Have a great summer!

der five should be unsupervised, for children 6-9 years of age it depends on how far and how long a parent will be gone (neighbor's house or lunch with friend?), and for children 10-12 the area is gray and depends on child's maturity and other fac-

Until next time, I am signing off.



tors.

Watch Your Drinking and