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POSTED: Tuesday, May. 24, 2011

DOL director Liz Luce says it's time to go home

Brad Shannon: The Politics Blog - The Olympian

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Liz Luce, the director at the Department of Licensing put out word to staff today that she is retiring effective June 30, ending a six-year run at the agency. In her email, she says there was a "gravitational" pull to return to Clark County, her home.

Gov. Chris Gregoire was notified but spokeswoman Karina Shagren said no plans are yet in the works to name a replacement for Luce.

In her email to staff, Luce said, in part:

This magnetic pull is something that is very real for me. My pull is to my home in Vancouver. I have found it to be getting stronger and stronger as the months have gone by. So this is my way of trying to explain that I have decided to retire on the 30th of June.

This is a bittersweet decision for me. I have always felt that if I could just move the Capitol to Vancouver, Washington I would have the perfect life. But somehow I could never manage that. When I came to Olympia I knew very few people. Over the years, I have gotten to know so many individuals within the Agency that I often think of you as more than co-workers but as a friend in arms. We have often fought the good fight - and won! We have done so many cool things together and I hope you feel that way too.

Luce and her husband Jim, a longtime Democrat who has served as chairman of the state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council since 2001, are from Vancouver. Their son, Tom Luce of Tacoma, is a Tacoma businessman and former congressional aide who got in the news recently with his proposal to let the state lease its liquor warehouse and distribution operations to a private bidder in exchange for profit-sharing and a cash payment to the state of perhaps \$300 million.

Luce said she had considered retiring her post in January but wanted to stay through what she knew would be a "rough" legislative session for the agency.

Her message to staff said:

"I am proud to say that I was able to negotiate a budget deal (with the help of the Governor of course!) that made our cut go from \$9 to \$6 to \$3 million...which was the original number in the Governor's proposed budget. I know that the other items that were not fully funded will make our cuts a little higher, but I also believe we can weather them."

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UPDATE: The agency has put out a news release that cited these highlights of her time at DOL:

*** Creating the nation's first enhanced driver license, which can be used as an alternative to a U.S. passport when traveling through all U.S. land and sea border crossing stations.*

*** Expanding online services on the department's website, reducing or eliminating the need for many customers to visit driver licensing offices.*

*** Reducing costs in tough economic times by creating email vehicle renewal reminders and encouraging citizens to sign up.*

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