



I always say that my first legislative session was in 1983 as I was in utero, absorbing knowledge and insight as my 9-month pregnant lobbyist mother continued working until the final moments, lugging around 10-pound baby Sara. My sister and I grew up in the Capitol building, we were often plopped on the desks of legislative assistance and secretaries while our mom worked. We would wear princess dresses and bring our stuffed animals to the building, sending them on wild slide adventures down the marble steps and ramps.

When I was 13, I was a Senate Page and I felt like the most important teenager in the world in the program because I already knew legislators and how to navigate campus. I was certain my page friends were very envious, although now that I look back, I'm sure they were not.

Growing up in a politically active household, I've always been drawn to the process. I saw firsthand how impactful decisions, that are made in Olympia, are in everyday life. I was always involved in student body government from middle school through college. I worked on campaigns (Democrats and Republicans) and stayed informed as much as I could, no matter which part of the country I was living in.

I went to the University of Arizona and started out as a political science major but then learned that I could get a degree in horses (my ultimate passion in life) and changed majors. I have a degree in Animal Science, Equine Industry and although that has proven to be completely useless, I did learn a lot, had good grades, and always took business and political science classes on top of everything else.

Post-graduation, I became a professional horse trainer which was so much fun, but I soon realized that it wasn't a very lucrative profession. I went back to working in the service industry and managed a restaurant before starting an event planning business. I mainly planned seminars and conferences for various associations, but I also did a lot of work fundraising for non-profits. I organized charity golf tournaments, auctions, galas, and weddings.

When my mother invited me to work with her, I was given an opportunity that doesn't come very often, and I couldn't pass up the chance to become a lobbyist. I've always wanted to help people and make a difference and I was fortunate to learn from one of the best. Following in her footsteps set me up for success in so many ways and I am truly thankful to be a part of something that is bigger than myself.

Here are some questions to help you get to know me better!

**If you won the lottery tomorrow what would you do with the money?**

After paying off bills and buying my mom something nice, I would want to start an addiction treatment center that incorporates rescue animals in its program. I think that the healing power of animals is magical and what better way to help a broken human by pairing them with a broken animal to care for. They would learn responsibility, empathy, and have an animal to confide in and trust with their secrets. I feel this would not only be a great way to save humans but also the animals would be loved and learn to trust again as well.

**What's the most inspiring part of your job?**

I love my job because I get to change lives. I love working with people and learning about their personalities, desires, and goals. I am tasked with bringing people together to make legislation that will positively impact our society. I often use an analogy that working on a bill is like trying to put together a puzzle, but all of the puzzle pieces are people; you have to put enough pieces of the puzzle together so you can see the final picture (that is the bill). It is a challenging effort of combining personalities, creating trust, and building relationships to create a result that everyone will agree with. It is a fulfilling, interesting, and unique career and I couldn't imagine doing anything else. (Other than running my treatment center, listed above.)

**What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?**

Do the right thing even if it's the unpopular choice. I've always been the one who stands up for the "little guy". I voice my opinion when something is wrong, unethical, cruel; even when no one else is speaking up. I'm not afraid to fail as long as I'm always striving to do what is right.

**What is the most important thing you learned before high school?**

BE NICE. Even when you don't want to be. You don't know the struggle someone else is going through and everyone has good inside of them even if you might not often see it.

**What is one important skill that you think everyone should have?**

I think every person should be required to work in the food service industry at least one point in their life. The skills you learn while waiting tables will help you navigate any situation for eternity! You learn humility, empathy, patience, responsibility, and how to deal with frustration and stress. People can be terrible and learning how to give them that extra side of tartar sauce with a smile when all you want to do

is dump it on their head is a skill that translates to many real life situations. Is the customer always right? No. But learning to handle difficult situations is an essential life skill that everyone needs to have.

### **What activity helps you relieve stress?**

I have been riding horses since I was 6 years old and now, many years later, it is still my number one passion and hobby. Being around horses is the best place to decompress and just “be” - you can’t afford to not pay attention and you must be truly in the moment while working with a 1,500 pound animal. Horses are so intuitive, and they feel your every emotion - as a prey animal, they must rely on each other for survival. If one member of the herd is scared or stressed, the rest of the herd follows suit because maybe that one horse saw a cougar in the woods that no one else did and therefore everyone needs to be on high alert. As a human, you become a part of the herd. If I am anxious, nervous, or stressed the horse feels it and becomes the same way.

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.” Being on horseback is truly my best way to practice mindfulness.

### **What is a unique skill you bring to your job?**

Most people describe being a lobbyist as extremely stressful and overwhelming at times. I agree, to an extent, but I am a person who thrives in chaos. The crazier things are the calmer I become. I become more patient, thoughtful, and aware when navigating the madness. While others are crying, yelling, and generally freaking out, I find peace and continue to look for the good in the situation before me. I’ve often been asked something like “How do you have so much energy? Why are you so happy right now?”

I’m not entirely sure why my brain works in that way, but I’ll take it any day over the other options! It proves time and again to be my greatest skill while working at the legislature.

### **What is your favorite line from a poem or song?**

*“It’s never too late in fiction, or in life, to revise.”* I like this because it means that it’s never too late to try again, start over, make change, do something different and fix what needs to be corrected.

### **How do you keep up with what’s going on in the world?**

When I was in the 3rd grade, I asked my parents if I could move in to the “TV room”. This was not because I wanted to stay up late watching TV (although you could sometimes find me watching late night reruns of Mr. Ed). I wanted to be able to wake up at 5 am so I could turn on King 5 news (I was 8. This is crazy.) I loved knowing what was going on in the world and waking up with Joyce Taylor, Dennis Bounds and Rich Marriott was the best way to start my day.

Now, as an adult, I’m a talk radio addict - KIRO radio or NPR is the first thing I click on every morning. I also enjoy reading the newspaper (maybe I am secretly an 80-year-old man?) and I stay away from “learning” about world events through social media. Social media is for sharing pictures of puppies befriending ducklings, not for gaining knowledge from biased, one-sided sources.

### **What is your best recipe?**

I call it “Thanksgiving Surprise” (also works for Christmas). You take a square of phyllo dough and place a little bit of your leftovers in the middle - turkey, stuffing, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peas, cranberries etc. Next, wrap it up into a little pouch and bake for 20 minutes. Serve in a bowl and top with gravy!

**What are three positive words that people often use to describe you?**

I asked my sister for the answer to this one. She said I am encouraging, intelligent and creative. I guess she will get a Christmas gift this year after all.

With Gratitude and Happy Holidays,

Sara Stewart

