



2011 Final Legislative Report

17th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
Summer 2011

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WASHINGTON STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear neighbors,

Thank you for the privilege of serving you in the legislature! To me, this job is about service to others, and getting real results. It's about an ethic of public service, respect for all people and points of view, and the competence to get things done.

On the economy, that means listening, learning and taking action. People are tired of short-term thinking. Most people see "stimulating" the economy – by pouring more debt-financed dollars into it – as a partial and temporary solution at best.

So I focus on real, long-term, structural reforms. Washington's economy must be built on a firm foundation. Cash stimulus alone is a foundation of sand.

The American people themselves are the true bedrock of our economy.

People all across Clark County told me we need to focus on our work ethic, our job skills, and our education. You told me Washington State should set itself apart from the rest of the world, by being the place where the best companies in the world create the best jobs in the world, because we have the best people in the world. And I listened.

For the last three years, I focused on the work ethic, job skills, small businesses, and education as the best way to serve the people's long-term economic interests. I call it the Washington Way.

As it turns out, it's not only a great way to build a thriving economy, but also helps strengthen our society as whole.

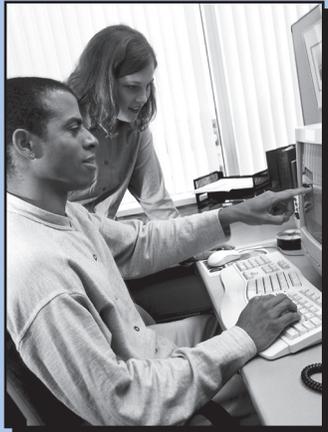
Inside this newsletter, you'll find information about jobs, education and the balancing the state budget. I hope you find it useful, and I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas.

Sincerely yours,

Tim Probst

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What is the Washington Way?



It's an economy and an entire society based on each person's talent, education, and work ethic.

Washington is an extraordinary place. When we set out to build a thriving society with a stable and resilient economy, we do it the Washington Way.

1) *Put people first.*

The economy exists for the people, not the other way around. Middle class job creation is our main economic goal.

2) *Teach the work ethic.*

Coupling education with direct job experience creates well-rounded students. Our kids will be ready for the workplace, and well-educated citizens of a healthy democracy.

3) *Educate for the full richness of our economy.*

There is dignity in all work. Each person defines success their own way. The economy needs skills across the full spectrum: skilled trades, technical training, college and university degrees, scientific research, creativity and the arts. A diverse economy needs them all. A vibrant society cultivates them all.

4) *Reap the rewards.*

A society based on people's talent, education, and work ethic will constantly surprise us with positive spin-off effects. Fewer people will need social services. Public safety may increase. The next world-leading company might be born right here in our own backyard.

Let's put the right forces in motion, and watch Washington lead the world.

Leading the Fight for Local Schools



Having the best people in the world -- and the best jobs -- means we need outstanding schools and universities. But in 2007, our nation's economy crashed, and nearly collapsed entirely. Now, we the people must decide how best to handle

this, so we can minimize the ongoing damage to our people, our students, and our economy.

In December of 2010, the biggest fear of local schools was a huge proposed cut to a fund called "levy equalization." That would have cut tens of millions of dollars for all of Clark County's schools, while preserving funding for many of the wealthiest school districts in Seattle.



At our local schools' urging, I organized a bipartisan team of over 60 legislators to fight against this cut. After 5 months of vigilance, this paid off, and these inequitable and unfair cuts were defeated.

All parts of the government took major cuts this year, including our schools, but the cuts to Clark County's schools are much smaller due to this successful bipartisan effort.

Long-Term Economic Restructuring

Our economy needs real reform—not just "stimulus." That means job skills, education, small business, and the work ethic! With a fantastic team of constituents and allies, here's what I've gotten done so far:

2009 - 2010 Legislative Session

Passed the Opportunity Internships Act, providing hundreds of internships for high school students at local businesses, and enabling them to earn assistance with the costs of college or apprenticeship.

Passed the Opportunity Express Act,

helping over 4,000 laid-off workers get retrained for new jobs in high-demand fields.

Passed two laws cutting red tape and fees for small businesses. Small businesses are the biggest job creators in our economy.

Passed the Evergreen Jobs Act, creating over 5,000 new jobs.

Got the WSU Vancouver Engineering Building built.

2011 Legislative Session

Passed the largest dropout prevention reform in over a decade, the PASS Act.

Passed the Opportunity Scholarships Act, to provide college scholarships for thousands of middle class families this year, using a public-private partnership to reduce costs to taxpayers.

Passed a bipartisan law extending the grace period for small businesses to help reduce state penalties and fees.

Required education institutions and state agencies to focus on expanding and strengthening the middle class and report progress each year to the legislature.

Victories for You, During a Tough Year Major New College Scholarship; Major Dropout Prevention Reform

I'm happy to report that creative thinking and teamwork led to the biggest dropout prevention reform in decades, and the biggest new college scholarship program in decades. Although I authored both of these, they are the result of several years of teamwork among many local constituents and allies across the state. As with most successes, the credit goes to an entire team of creative problems solvers.

Opportunity Scholarships (House Bill 2088)



The G.I. Bill sent my Uncle Bob to college. He was the first in our family to go, and that decision has impacted generations of my family after him. This year, I was hoping to find a way to protect the middle class from the looming increases in college tuition, by providing scholarships. But in the midst of the biggest state budget crisis in 70 years, I didn't think there was a very good chance of that.

In the end, though, Washington's private sector stepped forward with a possible solution, and over months of negotiation we designed the biggest new scholarship program in decades, funded up-front by voluntary donations from private donors. By December 1, 2011, thousands of new Opportunity Scholarships will be available for low-income and middle-income families. This scholarship reaches far into the middle class—more than any other similar program in the state's history. Families up to 125% of the average state income are eligible. For a family of four, that is just under \$98,000 per year.

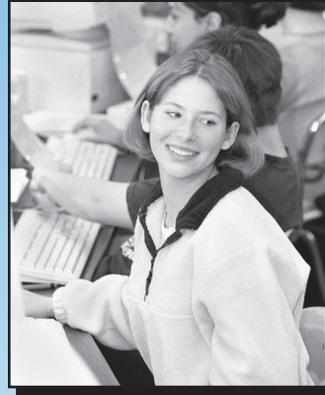
The state put in \$5 million in seed money, to start the ball rolling for private-sector fundraising. Since then, private companies have voluntarily committed \$50 million to this effort over the next five years. After our state's economy and budget have fully recovered, the state will begin paying a dollar-for-dollar match, to ensure this is a long-term solution, not a short-term flash in the pan.

Even more companies will be contributing in the future, so more students can get Opportunity Scholarships, earn their degree, get a good job and boost the economy of our town and our state.

Since the bill was only signed into law this June, no applications are available yet. I will make sure to let you know more details as the new Opportunity Scholarship system is put into place.

Opportunity Scholarships will serve thousands this year. Personally, I believe it will serve hundreds of thousands of people over time. Just like the G.I. Bill helped my Uncle Bob, and our whole family.

The PASS Act (House Bill 1599)



Getting our high school graduation rate to go up—fast—is non-negotiable. We have to make it happen.

We've conducted several trial runs in schools across the state, and found out that this can indeed be accomplished. Many of the test cases cut their dropout rates in half.

The PASS Act builds those scattered test cases into a systemic statewide dropout prevention system. "I've been in the education business for 43 years," says John Deeder, Superintendent of Evergreen School District, "And this is the biggest dropout prevention reform I've ever seen."

Everybody talks about fixing the high school dropout rate. Now Washington state is doing something about it. This is all about the kids. But it must also be observed that when our kids succeed, our economy succeeds, and our society as a whole is better off.



Rep. Tim Probst negotiates on the floor of the Washington State House of Representatives.

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Keeping Kids Safe – Thanks to an Alert Constituent



A local constituent who works to keep our kids safe from sex offenders called me one day, concerned that the budget cuts included plans to reduce enforcement and supervision for sex offenders. Even in tough financial times like these, that is no way to balance the budget. I wrote an amendment to the budget bill and got that fixed.

Unfortunately, I had to fight the same fight two more times on two subsequent budgets. But in the end, we won, and protections for our kids against sex offenders were not weakened or removed.

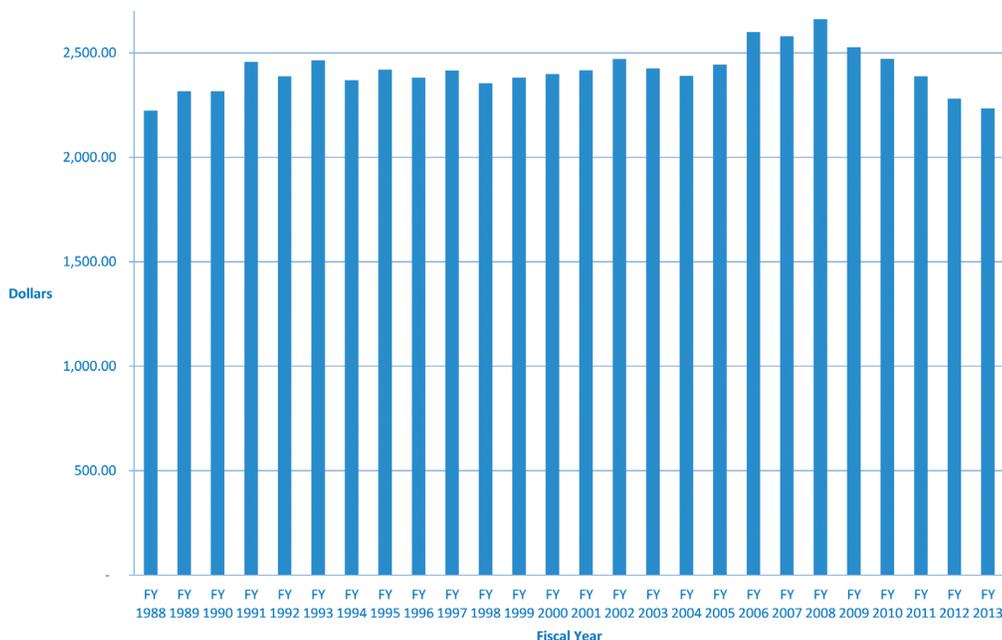
Save Money on Your Taxes!



Many seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities can save thousands on their property taxes. And many college students, and families with a child in college, can save \$2,500 on their federal income tax. Even if you don't pay federal income tax, the IRS will reimburse you for \$1,000 of your college costs. This extends to people with earnings far into the upper middle class.

For important information on higher education tax credits, property tax exemptions, and other useful resources, please visit my webpage at www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-tim-probst and click on the "Constituent Resources" link on the right.

**State Spending Per Person, Adjusted for Inflation,
Is At Its Lowest Level in 25 Years**



Balancing the State Budget

Unlike the national budget, the state budget is balanced, with a very small surplus. Government has to live within its means, just like families do, and we have significantly cut state spending throughout the ongoing economic crisis. State spending per person, adjusted for inflation, has been cut back to 1988 levels.

Consider this. In 1988, adjusted for inflation, a gallon of gas cost \$1.88, and the average new home cost \$188,890.00. State government's cost per person is the same now as it was back then.

What do you think?

Are we heading the right direction? Should we make some adjustments?

Let me know! I work for you, and I consistently find that the best ideas and solutions come straight from my constituents.

You can reach me by email, phone, regular mail or the free Hotline.



Rep. Tim Probst celebrating the creation of Opportunity Scholarships for the middle class with students and stakeholders.