

2012 Legislative News

Joe Fitzgibbon

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



OLYMPIA OFFICE:

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7952

EMAIL:

Joe.Fitzgibbon@leg.wa.gov

WEB PAGE:

[housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/
rep-joe-fitzgibbon](http://housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-joe-fitzgibbon)

TOLL-FREE HOTLINE:

1-800-562-6000

TTY-TDD (hearing impaired):

1-800-635-9993

COMMITTEES:

- Local Government
(Vice Chair)
- Environment
- General Government
Appropriations & Oversight
- Transportation

LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT:

Yoshi Kumara

EMAIL:

yoshi.kumara@leg.wa.gov



Dear neighbors,

The 2012 session is finally over. Unfortunately we had to go into over-time in a special session to complete our work. I am disappointed the work was not done on time, but the extra time allowed us to ensure that we balanced the budget with no cuts to K-12 education or higher education.

We also adopted a capital budget that will create over 20,000 new jobs in Washington. Funding for critical public safety net programs like the Basic Health Plan, family planning, mental health, and long-term care for the elderly and developmentally disabled was also preserved.

The budget has loomed large over the course of the 2012 session, but it is not the only important work that we have undertaken this year. During the regular session, we passed two landmark pieces of legislation, the first extends marriage equality to all Washingtonians and the second sets up the Health Care Exchange, which is part of our state's implementation of the Federal Affordable Care Act.

This was a challenging session to say the least. But I am grateful to take on those challenges on behalf of the residents in the 34th Legislative District. It is an honor and a privilege to represent you in Olympia and to serve as your voice. Please contact me with your comments, questions, or ideas. Now that session is over, I also have more time to meet with people and groups in district. I'd like to hear what's important to you and what you think should be our priority as we prepare for the 2013 session. Just give me a call or send an email.

Yours in service,

Joe Fitzgibbon

Joe Fitzgibbon • 2012 Legislative News

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

STREAMLINING ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING



The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) was enacted into law in 1971 and serves as one of Washington's core environmental protections. Since SEPA was enacted, other laws have been adopted, such as our state's Growth Management Act and updates to the federal Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Some of these new laws and regulations overlap with SEPA requirements creating duplicative processes for local governments and project developers.

Over the last year, I worked with a variety of stakeholders in local governments, environmental organizations, tribes, and business groups as well as my colleagues in the House and Senate from both parties to bring SEPA into the 21st Century. This session, I introduced HB 2253 to streamline the environmental review process. This bill would make it easier for local governments and project developers to comply with environmental laws while still protecting our environmental treasures such as Puget Sound. HB 2253 passed out of the House with overwhelming bipartisan support. Ultimately, this reform bill was incorporated into a different piece of legislation that streamlines several of our environmental laws without compromising environmental protection.

Ensuring a clean and healthy environment is important for Washington families and public health. Several attempts were made this session by lawmakers and special interests to undermine laws that protect our environment. I joined a group of lawmakers that successfully fought these efforts. I categorically reject the false choice between a clean environment and a vibrant economy. I will continue to fight to preserve the integrity of the laws that make Washington a beautiful and healthy place to live.

TAX REFORM FOR RESPONSIBLE BUDGETING



The current tax structure in Washington State is broken - complicated, unfair, unstable, and unsustainable. This November will mark ten years since the bi-partisan Washington State Tax Structure Study Committee came to the same conclusions. Our tax structure worked well at one time, but it is now doing the state a great disservice. It needs to be reformed.

I am proud to have worked with other freshman lawmakers over the last two years to ramp up the dialogue about how to fix our broken tax structure. We have pushed for a system that is more adequate, reliable, and fair for all taxpayers in Washington.

Our group proposed several bills this session to address the problems with our tax code. We have raised issues such as closing the out-of-state resident sales tax exemption and joining 42 other states in the practice of taxing capital gains. We want to create more transparency in the tax preference process. We want to consider options that would create an income tax while reducing our reliance on the volatile sales tax and the business-and-occupation tax, which is unfair to small businesses.

Our goals with these proposals are to enact reforms that will minimize the budget problems of tomorrow. Right now, too many special interests benefit from the current system, so the opposition to these changes is strong. Many legislators have committed to never voting for any kind of tax increase, regardless of the merits or fiscal tradeoffs that are made at the same time. It's a difficult process, but I'm confident that the more we discuss these issues, the more progress we will make towards a better taxing system.



Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon speaking on the house floor.

Joe Fitzgibbon • 2012 Legislative News

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

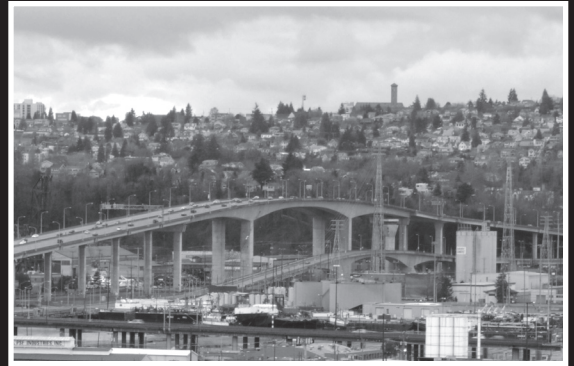


In light of the tough fiscal conditions many local governments face today, it's important we look for ways to be more efficient and make the best use of public dollars. One of my bills – HB 2748 – would consolidate the King County Ferry District and the King County Flood District into

the general government of King County. By consolidating these districts, King County will save over \$1 million a year resulting in better frontline services for county residents like flood control projects and ferry service to West Seattle and Vashon Island. This was another measure that had enough momentum to cross the finish line before session ended, but unrelated political maneuvering in the Senate prevented this bill from becoming law.

Under current law, cities and counties are required to meet road design standards established by the state Department of Transportation for bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and other roadways. In many cases, this one-size-fits-all approach doesn't meet the needs of communities and neighborhoods. This year, I sponsored HB 1700 to give local governments more tools to design transportation systems that work for everyone, including cyclists and pedestrians. The bill calls for new standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and allows cities and counties to use street or road project funds for pedestrian right-of-way and improvement projects. This bill, which was signed into law, will ultimately lead to safer roadways for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

I also sponsored several other measures that the governor signed into law to give more flexibility to local governments, such as HB 1398 which reduces the costs to build low-income housing by exempting these projects from impact fees; HB 1627 which gives boundary review boards more flexibility to create logical and workable jurisdictional boundaries, and HB 1217 which eases restrictions on a local government's ability to reduce speed limits to make streets safer for children, pedestrians and other non-car roadway users. Local governments are facing fiscal squeezes not unlike that faced by the state, and these measures among others will help local governments save taxpayer dollars that they can instead invest in front-line services like parks and public safety.



DISTRICT BILLS

The legislature was successful in passing a number of bills that will have positive impacts in the 34th Legislative District. The \$9 billion transportation budget includes \$130 million in funding to build a new 144-car ferry to help sustain ferry service in the Puget Sound. The new boat will be built in the 34th Legislative District at Vigor Shipyards and will serve passengers on the Southworth/Fauntleroy/Vashon run. Overall, the transportation budget will create or sustain about 43,000 jobs in the state.

Another bill with a positive impact in our district is SB 6414, which provides regulatory certainty for utilities and private companies to meet their clean energy goals. Enacted by the voters in 2006 through I-937, the Energy Independence Act requires certain utility companies to meet energy conservation targets using renewable resources. Some conservation programs are spelled out very clearly in the law. Others are less clear. SB 6414 would allow public utilities to seek binding decisions before beginning work on new energy conservation projects.

West Seattle's own Nucor Steel and Seattle City Light have a project that will convert waste heat that's currently going up into the atmosphere and use it to generate new electricity through turbines. With SB 6414 signed into law providing additional certainty, the partners can move forward with this innovative energy conservation project, create jobs in our community, and move us towards a clean energy future.

Joe Fitzgibbon • 2012 Legislative News

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

STATE INVESTMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY




In addition to our operating and transportation budgets, the state has a capital budget that pays for long-term projects like construction and maintenance for schools, hospitals, and prisons. It also helps pay for community projects like salmon restoration and youth athletic fields.

This year, the capital budget provides nearly \$29 million in funding to address homeless problems for veterans, chronically mentally ill, families with children, and youth. The budget allocates \$1.7 million for youth housing in partnership with the Navos Consortium, a group of mental health and social service providers located in the 34th District.

MORE WORK YET TO COME

Certain top priorities of mine did not make it into law this year, including local funding options for transit agencies like King County Metro, which is critical to saving bus service in our communities, and the Children's Safe Products Act (sponsored by Sen. Nelson), to get cancer-causing chemicals out of children's toys. While it's disappointing that these measures did not pass, they will be even more important for future legislatures to deal with.

Printed on recycled paper 



Olympia, WA 98504-0600

P.O. Box 40600

Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon

2012 Legislative News

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OLYMPIA WA
PERMIT NO 92