



## 22<sup>nd</sup> District



# 2012

## Legislative Wrap-up

**Rep. Sam Hunt**



**Rep. Chris Reykdal**

### Dear Friends and Neighbors:

It's our great honor to represent the 22<sup>nd</sup> legislative district in the House of Representatives. We're privileged indeed to speak for folks who live in Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and parts of unincorporated northern Thurston County, including the communities of Boston Harbor, Cooper Point, and Johnson Point.

Our newsletter today is aimed at bringing you up to speed on a few of the issues we've tackled these past couple of months. It's no secret that times remain incredibly challenging for families, businesses, and yes, even for policymakers trying to do the right thing. Shrinking revenues and swollen demands for the services that those revenues sustain make it more difficult than ever to find the most fitting mix of cost-cutting and social-safety-net protecting. We need to keep in mind that Washington's population has grown by 830,000, and Thurston County by more than 46,000 alone. These additional people need and expect the same things we get as Washington residents – quality schools, safe neighborhoods, good roads, and dependable childcare.

While we've received some good economic news in recent months, that won't undo the damage that's been done in the past few years. We've been forced to slice funding for vital programs and services. In all too many cases, we've shredded funding completely for the very programs and services that a 21<sup>st</sup> century society has every duty to ensure for its citizens. Our stand? We must defend:

- Stable funding for a thriving basic education system.
- Opportunities for people willing to work.
- Health care and other essential services for citizens in need.

Like many of you, we have dedicated our lives to public service. And we know that public-sector employees have been asked to sacrifice more than their fair share to solve our state's budget crisis. We are committed to protecting the living wage and pension plans into which our teachers, firefighters, caseworkers and other public employees have built their careers. Most of these hard working people have received actual cuts in their take-home pay each year since 2010, and they have not received a cost-of-living raise since 2008. These cuts have had a huge negative impact on our local economy.

It's equally important for us to remember that not everyone here in the South Sound, or anywhere else, works for the state. We very much understand and appreciate the importance of a thriving private sector. We have worked hard over the last two years to support our small businesses and non-profits by simplifying the regulatory environment without compromising our values around protecting the public interest, including our natural resources.

Please don't hesitate to contact our offices with your ideas and concerns for the direction of our state. Our neighborhoods here in Thurston County epitomize an informed and conversant constituency. When it comes to our work as legislators, we know we'll never get anywhere without the input of you, the people we're so fortunate to represent.

Best,

Rep. Sam Hunt

Rep. Chris Reykdal

**TOLL FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:**

1-800-562-6000

**HEARING IMPAIRED HOTLINE:**

1-800-635-9993



## State Representative Sam Hunt

### OLYMPIA OFFICE:

438B Legislative Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7992

### E-MAIL:

Sam.Hunt@leg.wa.gov

### 2012 COMMITTEES:

- State Government & Tribal Affairs  
(Chair)
- Education
- Ways & Means



You know the score all too well. The 2012 regular legislative session was gavelled to adjournment on March 8, well before we actually finished answering the budget questions. It would eventually take a second special session and an all-night marathon of floor action to finally reach an agreement.

It's easy to criticize the 60-day regular session for titanic failures to launch (1) a budget on time, and (2) a tax-reform plan worth a dime. But let's not dismiss the fact that these past few months haven't been without some redeeming social value. *Specifically, the 2012 legislative session should also be remembered for Democrats drawing a line in the sand on behalf of a quality public education for our children, lasting economic development for working people, and reliable services and peace of mind for senior citizens.*

## A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION FOR EVERY STUDENT IN WASHINGTON

As two former educators and school board members, we have a unique appreciation for the public education system in Washington. Every aspect of our quality of life is dependent on the strength of public education to support the academic achievement of students. *Education is not only key to family-wage jobs, but also to Washington's thriving future.*

The budget crisis has not been particularly kind to our schools. Without a way to raise significant revenue, K-12 education and school employees have taken \$2.7 billion in cuts in the past three

years alone. Higher education has been clipped \$1.3 billion, and \$29.4 million in reductions have been taken out of early learning and child care.

*The supplemental budget we approved made no cuts to basic education and higher education.* We were able to save the five-day school week, initially on the chopping block in the governor's budget. We were also able to fund levy equalization, and keep our promise of a bonus to national board-certified teachers. We made small reductions to highly effective programs like Promoting Actual Student Success (PASS), Readiness to Learn, Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST), and career and technical education start-up grants.



Back in January, the Washington State Supreme Court said that we weren't meeting our paramount duty to fully fund education. *We couldn't agree more.* Our children deserve a public education system that is effective, and that fosters growth and creativity. Furthermore, we must ensure that the doors of higher education are open to every Washington student, not just those who come from wealthy families. Small adjustments in our tax code can prevent children's programs from being slammed down on the chopping block every time the Legislature writes a budget. In coming years, we'll be looking at long-term solutions to fully funding our education system.



Rep. Hunt speaks with another representative on the house floor.





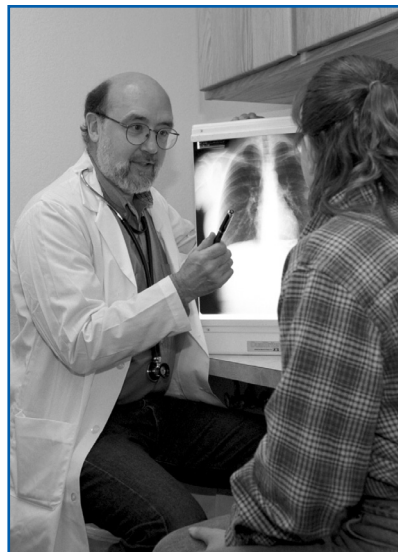
## PLAYING DEFENSE FOR OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

The ultimate budget plan finally delivered to the governor lives by these values:

- No cuts to adult day health care, which was eliminated in the governor's original budget proposal.
- No cuts to the Senior Citizens Services Act, which was eliminated in the governor's original budget proposal.
- No cuts to the agency-provider rate, which was slashed by millions of dollars in the governor's original budget proposal.

We believe every citizen deserves health care. Children and senior citizens, working people (very much including small-business owners), college students, and returning veterans – everybody should have dependable access to affordable medical attention if and when they honestly need it.

We passed and the governor signed into law a new state standard to help implement the federal *Affordable Care Act* here in Washington. A major piece of health-care reform is the *Health Benefits Exchange*, which stands as a new technique for purchasing health coverage. Individuals and families without Medicare, Medicaid or employer-sponsored health coverage – and with an income below 400-percent



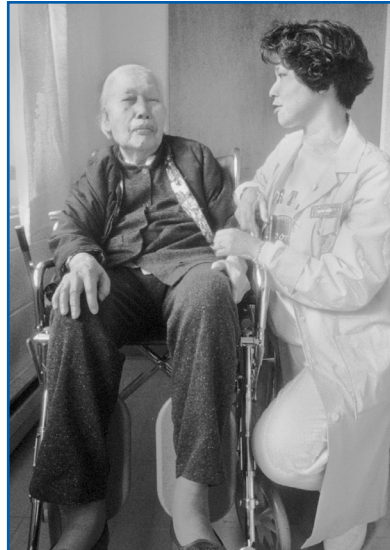
of the federal poverty level – will be eligible for tax credits for health-care premiums. The *Health Benefits Exchange* will:

- Protect consumers by making it easier both to shop for health plans and to compare prices and quality of care.
- Provide health coverage for people who have chronic health problems or serious illnesses.
- Build reasonable standards for consumer-protection, covered services, health-care-provider selection, and financial solvency.
- Ensure that health plans sold through the Exchange include essential health benefits, such as hospital and physician care, and coverage for prescription drugs, and rehabilitation and mental-health and chemical-dependency services.

If you have kids in college or just starting out in adult life, they can get health coverage through your policy up to age 26.

Health plans can neither deny children coverage based on pre-existing medical conditions nor include pre-existing-condition exclusions for children. New or renewed health plans are required to cover preventive medicine, such as immunizations for kids.

Medicare recipients also benefit. Pharmaceutical manufacturers are providing a 50-percent discount on brand-name prescriptions filled in the Medicare Part D coverage gap. There are also federal subsidies for generic prescriptions with Medicare Part D.



State Representative  
**Chris Reykdal**

### OLYMPIA OFFICE:

319 John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7940

### E-MAIL:

Chris.Reykdal@leg.wa.gov

### 2012 COMMITTEES:

- Labor & Workforce Development  
(Vice Chair)
- Education Appropriations & Oversight
- Higher Education
- Transportation



Rep. Reykdal speaks with other representatives on the house floor.

Rep. Sam Hunt



Rep. Chris Reykdal



### FIGHTING FOR A TAX SYSTEM THAT IS FAIR

It happens almost every day. A constituent will come in to one of our offices pleading for a particular program or grant that is on the chopping block. They'll ask us simply to close an outdated tax loophole to fund their program and a few others. The short answer: We can't.

As most of you know, strict budgeting parameters in Initiative 1053 were approved two years ago. The initiative requires a two-thirds majority vote for the Legislature to raise revenue. This has effectively tied our hands. We simply cannot find enough lawmakers willing to put the health and safety of our children, vulnerable people and families, and senior citizens ahead of powerful special interests. We have joined a coalition of people asking the court to clarify once and for all if a two-thirds majority vote-requirement is constitutional. Frankly, the fiscal and physical health of our state rides on this answer.

This year we produced a budget that is balanced, as we always do. But unfortunately this balance came on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens. Moving forward, we need to examine strategies to stabilize our revenue streams and prevent a crisis tomorrow that is similar to – or even worse than – the one we're facing today.

We'd like to review a few proposals aimed at getting *and keeping* our state of Washington's financial house in order:

- Forty-two other states have imposed a capital-gains tax, and it's time we consider such a strategy here in Washington. A five-percent excise tax on capital gains over \$10,000 a year would be a good step toward fairness in our tax code.
- A flat one-percent constitutionally protected income tax to guarantee universal first-year college access for every student in our state.
- Sun-setting every tax loophole, or at least requiring a thorough and regular analysis.

We've seen what happens when the economy takes a plunge in a state – ours! – that is so dependent on sales-tax revenue. We simply must begin to take steps now to ensure long-term stability. *Despite the mounting rhetoric, we're actually spending the same today per person as we were 25 years ago.* The tax burden has actually declined significantly over the last 40 years. We can and should have courageous conversations about spending priorities *and* revenue solutions.