Rep. Luis Moscoso

2013 E-Legislative Report

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Dear Neighbors:

Washington state has to pass an operating budget every other year, and it's never easy. This session, though, it was harder than anyone can remember, even lawmakers who have been in office for many years agree that this was a most difficult session. But we did it, in the end we avoided a government shutdown and passed a workable budget.

The state will get $85 million in net revenue over the next two years from closing the telecom tax loophole, which helps in allocating more money into schools, per the Supreme Court's McCleary decision. But, without other new sources of revenue, it's really remarkable that we were able to make these important investments in education:

K-12 / Public School

- $374 million for MSOC (Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs)
- $143 million for the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) expansion
- $131.7 million for pupil transportation
- $103.6 million to reduce early elementary class size (K-1)
- $89.8 million to expand all-day Kindergarten
- $24 million for additional guidance counselors
- $18.9 million for additional bilingual instruction
- $15 million for teacher and principal evaluation training
- $10.3 million to address persistently lowest-achieving schools

There were savings and reductions in K-12 as well:

- $295.5 million from suspending I-732
- $24.9 million from assessment reforms
- $11 million from Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) audit recoveries
- $6.4 million from consolidating Readiness to Learn into LAP
- $5 million by eliminating Navigation 101 grants

Higher Education

Determining in-state undergraduate tuition policy and the level of support for colleges and universities was challenging. The original House approach was allowing modest tuition growth and increasing the amount going to the State Need Grant. The original Senate approach was a reduction in tuition assumptions. The compromise was to not increase tuition in the 2013-15 biennium, but provide sufficient state support to higher education institutions to make up for the lack of tuition revenue. In the first year of the biennium, there is a "hard" cap on tuition, meaning that there can be no increase in tuition. In the second year, there is a "soft" cap, which allows institutions to raise tuition if they provide the requisite increase in State Need Grant support.

We also passed important measures that will undoubtedly make a difference in the lives of many Washingtonians. But there were good policy bills that did not make it to the governor's desk. I hope you find this session's highlights informative.

Why We Need a State Voting Rights Act

While there's no denying that the Federal Voting Rights Act has been successful in expanding minority participation, it hasn't been enough.

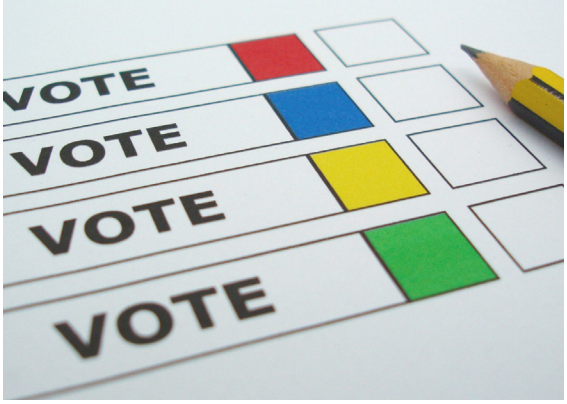
A few months ago the Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the Federal Voting Rights Act, a preclearance rule to determine which states needed to get federal approval before changing any voting laws. It was a key piece of the federal law specifically included to protect and uphold the voting rights of all people regardless of race, color and ethnicity.

Only one week later, believe it or not, North Carolina Republicans proposed a number of changes to their voting laws that one week earlier would have required approval from the federal government because they were aimed at suppressing minority voting. And, sure enough, those measures were passed and enacted in that state.

The problem is not limited to North Carolina. In fact, more than 80 bills restricting voting rights have been introduced in 31 states so far this year.

Here in Washington we believe every vote should count and our government must be accountable to every citizen. We believe everyone should have a voice.

After the Supreme Court ruling and North Carolina's new voting laws, now more than ever it is up to the states to take the necessary steps to ensure the voices of every ethnic minority are heard in every election.



And that's why I sponsored **House Bill 1413**, the Washington State Voting Rights Act. The purpose of my legislation is really very simple, we want to ensure that:

- all voices are heard in local elections.
- everyone has a fair chance to be represented
- everyone has a fair chance to elect candidates of their choice

Specifically, this bill would provide a solution where broken

elections systems exclude communities from a fair chance at representation. When communities are excluded, potholes are not fixed, neighborhoods are not safe and residents don't know where to turn.

But let's just make this very clear: the Washington Voting Rights Act does not mandate any particular voting system. It merely allows the problem of voter exclusion to be solved in ways to give every individual an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

This year my bill made it through the House but it was killed in the Senate. I and many of my colleagues will bring it back next session to continue fighting for true democracy in our state.

Don't Drink and Drive, We Mean It

As the legislative session was finally reaching its end we passed bipartisan DUI reform to target and crack down on the most chronic and persistent drunk drivers.

Senate Bill 5912 makes a few common-sense upgrades to our current DUI laws:

- Imposes mandatory arrests for a second drunk driving offense. Current law does not require that an offender be taken to jail.
- Requires the installation of an interlock system within five business days of release. Under previous law, there was no consistent requirement for this important safeguard to be installed.
- Provides critical funding for prosecutors to file charges against chronic offenders.

As a member of the House Public Safety Committee, I am glad that we got this done, but to solve the issue of people under the influence getting behind the wheel we still have plenty of work to do. If you have ideas on how to go about solving this problem to make our roads safer, let me know.

Mental Health Reform

Does it seem like every time you turn on the news they're reporting on yet another tragedy that could have been prevented if the perpetrator had gotten mental health care? We passed several bills to improve mental health care and make Washington a safer place:

Senate Bill 5480 speeds-up the implementation of changes to the involuntary treatment law – funding the updates two years ahead of schedule. This new approach takes into account input from family members and friends when making a decision to commit. It also allows decision makers to take a close look at a person's history of mental health behavior.

House Bill 1114 fills the gap between the criminal justice system and mental health care providers. It ensures that violent mental health offenders get the treatment they need, instead of ending up on the streets.

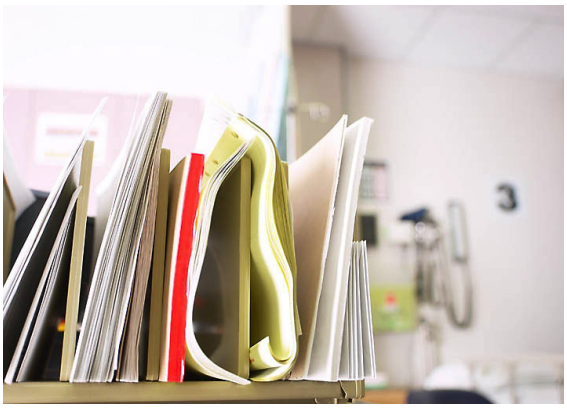
Senate Bill 5732 builds a bridge between hospitals and the community for the mentally ill. It creates a step down from state hospitals – which will provide an important service to folks beginning to transition back into day-to-day life. This isn't just the right thing to do – it's the cost-effective approach.

Workforce Development and Jobs

The best path to a good job is a good education, and businesses in our state are demanding more skilled workers to remain competitive. This session we passed bills to help Washington workers gain more skills and Washington businesses grow:

- The Job Skills Program assists small businesses by providing short-term employee training programs. This year we passed **House Bill 1247** to make it easier for small businesses to take advantage of the program by adding greater flexibility for employers and making training opportunities more accessible.
- In 2007, the Legislature created the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, a pilot project to retrain injured workers. This session, with passage of **House Bill 1887**, injured workers will be able to complete their rehabilitation program at four-year universities, giving them additional opportunities as they figure out how they reenter the workforce.
- The timing around enrollment can be challenging for our veterans and members of the National Guard. To help them out, we passed **House Bill 1109**, which requires schools offering early-registration programs to extend that same benefit to eligible service members.

An Easier Way to Shop for Insurance



Starting in October of 2013, all Washingtonians will be able to use **Washington Healthplanfinder**, which will:

- Protect consumers by making it easier to shop for health plans and truly compare prices, services offered and quality of care.
- Help those with chronic health problems or high-cost illnesses get health coverage.
- Establish minimum standards for consumer protection, covered services, healthcare provider selection and financial solvency.
- Help people with serious health problems get affordable coverage through our state's high risk pool or the Evergreen Health Marketplace.

Transportation and Capital Budgets

Among this year's session accomplishments in the Transportation and Capital Budgets, two projects are of significant importance in the 1st district:

- Mountlake Terrace received a $2 Million Mainstreet Grant to reconstruct the key roads in the Town Center. This will be critical to the long-term revitalization that has been underway in the City since 2008.
- Cascadia Community College is receiving over $700 thousand for their Minor Works Program & Site Preservation and Facility and Site Repairs.

To see the complete lists of transportation and capital projects in our district, please **click here** and then follow these steps:

- Under the "Budgets" section, select Transportation Budget or Capital Budget
- Select the "Project Maps" tab and "Selected Legislative District" in the drop-down menu

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Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you want additional information or have any feedback, be sure to contact my office or send me an email. The legislative session may be over, but I am your legislator rear 'round.

Sincerely,

Luis