

## 24th Legislative District

# Legislative Report 2013

Dear Neighbors:

It continues to be a privilege and an honor to serve as your state legislators. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to make sure your voice and the voice of rural communities are heard in Olympia.

This newsletter gives us the opportunity to talk about the 2013 session and look ahead to 2014. Among our accomplishments last year was working with our colleagues to overcome deep partisan divides and pass a budget that sets Washington on solid ground entering the 2013-15 biennium. This is just the first step in a long process that will bring Washington back from the effects of the Great Recession but we are excited about the opportunity and look forward to continuing that work and meeting the challenges before us.

Working together, the three of us have and will continue to accomplish great things for the 24th Legislative District and the state. This included:

- Reforms to the mental health system
- Improving efficiency and workplace safety in the logging industry
- Making the roadways of the Olympic Peninsula safer
- Assisting our seniors so that they can grow old with the dignity they deserve
- Honoring the men and women who served, but never returned home

At the end of this newsletter, you will find a response card with space to write comments or concerns and return them to our legislative offices. Feedback and open lines of communication are critical to our ability to effectively represent you and we encourage you to take this opportunity to let us know what is on your mind.

I hope you find this report useful and informative. As always, please do not hesitate to call, write or email our respective offices if you need more information, have questions or concerns, or want to provide feedback.

Sincerely,



*Senator*

**Jim Hargrove**

Jim.Hargrove@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40424  
Olympia, WA 98504-0424  
(360) 786-7646

535 East 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
(360) 457-2520

**Senior Legislative Assistant:**  
Patsy Feeley

**Legislative Assistant:**  
Shawn O'Neill



*Representative*

**Kevin Van De Wege**

Kevin.VanDeWege@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7916

64 Village Lane  
Sequim, WA 98382  
(360) 582-9830

**Legislative Assistant:**  
Linda Barnfather



*Representative*

**Steve Tharinger**

Steve.Tharinger@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7904

64 Village Lane  
Sequim, WA 98382  
(360) 582-9830

**Legislative Assistant:**  
Leanne Horn

Senator Jim Hargrove

Representative Kevin Van De Wege

Representative Steve Tharinger



## Senator **JIM HARGROVE**

### Working across party lines to write a bipartisan budget

I've always believed that putting aside party labels and working together is the only way to succeed. In 2013, the

Legislature overcame a deep partisan divide to pass the 2013-15 budget by an overwhelmingly bipartisan 44-4 vote.

This budget was truly remarkable. Thanks to an improving economic forecast, we were able to invest \$1 billion into our public education system and do so without crippling our investments in programs that keep the public safe. This was done without creating new taxes and while allowing expiring taxes to sunset. The only revenue that was added in this budget were fixes to the telecommunications tax and the estate tax, fixes supported by bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate. In coming together to accomplish this task, we have set our state on a solid foundation entering the next biennium.

As the Legislature gathers for the 2014 session, one of the tasks before us will be the adoption of a supplemental budget. In spite of an improving economic climate, I don't believe that this is the time to begin spending what little new revenue is available to us. While times are improving, we cannot afford to adopt new policies with large price tags. Any new policies that come before the Legislature must include their own funding source. Relying on the general fund for new policies during uncertain times is unwise and could lead us back into a predicament where we were forced into devastating cuts to programs that keep people healthy and safe.

### Making smart investments to protect the most vulnerable



Keeping the public safe is the most important job the Legislature has. In addition to supporting bills to strengthen Washington's mental health system, I was also proud to sponsor and support a number of bills that protect our children from threats ranging from sex offenders to dangerous influences that

can be found on the streets of Washington. This included:

- A bill giving victims of child sex abuse more time to come forward by extending the statute of limitations to prosecute a case.
- Requiring the Department of Social and Health Services to more closely examine background checks for people seeking licenses for work involving unsupervised access of children.

- Requiring that shelters notify either parents or the Department of Social and Health Services within 72 hours after a child is known to be away from home without permission.

Protecting our children has been and will always be of the utmost importance to me. This year and every year, I look forward to supporting successful ways and creating new ways to ensure that our children are safe and healthy.

### Honoring the men and women who never came home



We must never forget the sacrifice of the men and women who have fought and died for our country. In a small way, I have sought to implant those memories in the minds of drivers on the Olympic Peninsula by supporting the designation of several veterans' memorial highways.

During the 2013 session, I was thrilled to work with members of the Korean War Veterans Association to designate a section of Highway 117 in Port Angeles as a POW/MIA Memorial Highway to honor soldiers who were held as prisoners of war and those declared missing in action.

These soldiers, sailors and airmen went through a lot in the service of their country. The lucky ones came home. Many did not. In this small way, we honor their sacrifice and their memory.

### Making worker protection more effective and affordable



While the logging industry has become primarily mechanized, there is still a small group of loggers who rely on manual methods to fall trees. The increased danger in that field means the workers compensation rates have doubled, rising to the point where the rates are higher than wages.

Under a bill I sponsored, the state Dept. of Labor & Industries must reach out to manual logging companies and invite them to participate in the Logger Safety Initiative. The initiatives safety program will include worker training, supervision standards and a certification process for each company and upon completion those companies may save up to \$4 per hour in L & I rates. Through this program, we help to improve safety and working conditions while at the same time saving the companies money.



## Representative **KEVIN VAN DE WEGE** House Majority Whip

### Mental health reform

We have all seen what can happen when those suffering with mental illness don't get the medical attention they need. This session, we passed

a package of reforms to improve mental health care and to make Washington state a safer place.

Senate Bill 5480 speeds-up the implementation of improvements to our involuntary treatment laws. A few years ago, we approved new parameters for the involuntary commitment of people with pressing mental health issues. The new approach takes input from family members and friends into consideration when making a decision to commit.

Other measures signed into law include:

- 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.

### Working to prevent tragedy on our roadways



Our community is no stranger to the senseless tragedies that can occur when someone gets behind the wheel after too much to drink.

As a paramedic, I've seen firsthand the terrible carnage caused by a drunk driver more times than I can count.

As a husband and a father, I fear hearing a knock on the door in the middle of the night only to learn that a loved one has been injured or killed by a drunk driver.

Too many Washington families have heard these knocks in recent years.

One of the bright spots from last legislative session was the effort to target and crack-down on the most chronic and persistent of drunk drivers.

The measure, which passed with bipartisan support, makes a few changes to our current DUI laws:

- Imposes mandatory arrests for a second drunk driving offense. Current law does not require than an offender be taken to jail.
- Requires an interlock system to be installed within five business days of release.
- Provides critical funding for prosecutors to file charges against chronic offenders.

While these changes are major upgrades, there is always more we can do. If you have ideas on ways to reach our target-zero goals, don't hesitate to get in-touch with me.

### Making Washington a safer place – one student at a time



This year I sponsored legislation to ensure that all Washington students leave high school with the skills to administer life-saving medical care in an emergency.

Almost 383,000 Americans experience sudden cardiac arrest outside of the hospital ever year, and four out of five of those cases happen at home. Even the most efficient of first responders often times can't make it to the scene in time for resuscitation efforts to be effective.

According to the American Heart Association, "Only one-third of

sudden cardiac arrest victims receive CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), which when administered by a layperson can double, or even triple, survival rates."

House Bill 1556 requires CPR training to be included in a high school health class curriculum. This course comes with very little costs to schools and can be taught in about 20 minutes. The legislation was signed into law by Governor Inslee earlier this year.

This is about saving lives when every second counts. I'm proud that every Washington graduate will soon have the know-how to save the life of a family member, friend, or stranger on the street.



## Representative **STEVE THARINGER**

### Meeting the needs of an aging population

Washingtonians are living longer, healthier and more independent lifestyles. Fourteen percent of Washington's population is over the age of 65, and in the 24th legislative district that figure is closer to 30 percent.

This is great news, but it does mean that we have got to prepare to meet the broad spectrum of issues facing the needs of an aging population from transportation, livable communities, health care and financial needs.

Last legislative session, I worked to secure funding to create the Joint Legislative Committee on Aging and Disability to bring together a group of legislators, agencies heads, and private sector service providers to focus on the needs of this demographic.

I am honored to co-chair the important committee work that ensures our family members and friends can grow old with the dignity they deserve.

### Fighting for access to health care

Beginning in 2014, Medicaid eligibility is changing – you or someone you know may qualify for the first time.

- Households under 138% of the FPL will qualify with no cost sharing.
  - Households with incomes 139-400% of the FPL will be eligible for tax credits.
- (Source: WA State Healthcare Authority)

There are also eligibility changes for pregnant women and children. To learn more, visit <http://www.hca.wa.gov/hcr/me/Pages/eligibility.aspx>.

In addition to changes to Medicaid, all Washingtonians can now use Washington Healthplanfinder – our states online one-stop shop for health insurance. Despite hiccups with the federal exchange, our site is up-and-running and has led the nation in successful sign-ups.



To learn more about your options, visit [www.wahealthplanfinder.org](http://www.wahealthplanfinder.org) or call 1-855-WAFINDER. Open enrollment is underway and runs until March 31, 2014.

I've also worked hard to maintain funding for hospitals, the pillars of care for citizens in rural Washington – including the 24th legislative district. Last year, we preserved funding for critical access hospitals that were on the chopping block.

This year, sole community hospitals, including our own Grays Harbor Community Hospital and Olympic Medical Center, will receive funding to address shortfalls in some Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements rates.

In addition, Peninsula Behavioral Health and Grays Harbor PACT team received funding and will continue to ensure that folks get the help and care they need.

### Tax fairness for Washington



Especially in these tough times, when families are still struggling, the state needs to examine every bit of spending. This analysis should include the billions in tax preferences we hand out every year.

Some tax breaks are effective and serve a real purpose. Just this year I sponsored legislation to create

a tax preference for the struggling pulp and paper industry. This change supports 1,500 direct jobs in the 24th legislative district alone.

Not all tax preferences are as effective. They are often very costly, and offer little return on investment.

Last legislative session, we laid the groundwork to bring our tax code out of the backrooms and into the public spotlight. We closed a few loopholes, and implemented strict accountability for the tax preferences we created – including the pulp and paper exemption.

As vice chair of the House Finance Committee, I'll continue to work hard to make sure that exemptions are a good return on investment for the state of Washington.

Fold with this panel out to return your survey



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### Senator Jim Hargrove

PO Box 40424  
Olympia WA 98504-0424



FOLD .....

## MEMBERS OF THE 24<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US

Seven horizontal lines for writing

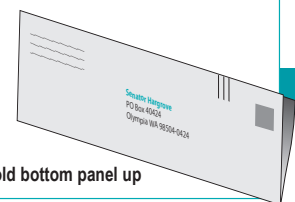
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WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

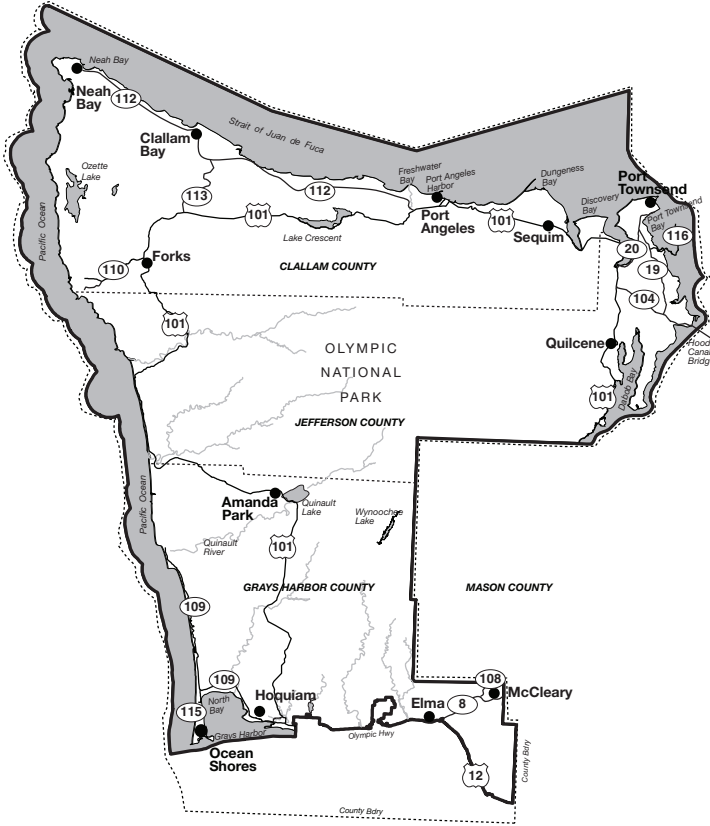
**Return mail:** Fold mailpiece with my return address panel showing, tape edges and affix a first-class stamp.  
**Thank you!**



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## 24th Legislative District Map



## Committee Assignments

### Senator Jim Hargrove

- Ways & Means (Ranking Member)
- Human Services & Corrections
- Natural Resources & Parks

### Representative Kevin Van De Wege

#### House Majority Whip

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Government Operations & Elections
- Health Care & Wellness
- Rules

### Representative Steve Tharinger

- Finance (Vice Chair)
- Appropriations
- Environment
- Health Care & Wellness

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Olympia, WA 98504-0424

Sen. Jim Hargrove  
Rep. Kevin Van De Wege  
Rep. Steve Tharinger

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