



Report to the 49th District

Spring 2014



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- Labor & Workforce Development
- Rules
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After fast start in House of Representatives, many good ideas doomed in Senate

Early this past January, the state House of Representatives jumped quickly out of the starting gate.

Just a few hours into session, we passed the “DREAM Act” (**SB 6523**) – a bipartisan step to make sure that all deserving, hard-working young people have a fair chance to go to college. This measure, long-sought here in Washington (and already on the books in many other states), became the first significant “first-day-of-session” bill in many years to pass either chamber. It is only fair that all hardworking young people who qualify for college have a chance to apply for aid to help cover the high cost.

These folks are our neighbors who were brought as little kids to the United States. Today, through no fault of their own, they’re living in Washington in an undocumented status. They’ve worked hard, they’ve finished high school, and they understandably embrace the dream of earning a higher education. Now, at last, this new state law allows these young people the same rights as their peers to apply for a grant. It was a victory for common sense when, later on in session, **enough senators who formerly opposed the DREAM Act** came around, passed the bill, and sent it on for the governor’s signature. This is a true victory for fairness and our future.

Supplemental Operating Budget

The House proposal would have closed some tax loopholes in order to fund COLAs for teachers and make investments in the quality of our early learning system, neither of which came to fruition because the Senate did not agree to the tax exemption package. The supplemental operating budget (**SB 6002**) passed this year is modest, but it strengthens investments in areas such as:

- K-12 supplies, books and technology, a modest part of our McCleary obligation.
- Significant steps on mental health beds and services at the community level.
- 5000 new slots for services to our developmentally disabled community.
- Payment increases for child care providers and we took steps towards a tiered reimbursement system that should
- State program caseload and other mandatory changes.
- TANF program reinvestments to help struggling families achieve economic success.



“Speaker Pro Tempore Jim Moeller on the House rostrum, presiding over official House floor proceedings”

Make “open government” a reality

Sunshine is the best possible “weather condition” for government operations. Everyone is a winner when government conducts public business in the public eye. Elected officials and the men and women who work in our behalf need to know and embrace the importance of open government. And that includes the laws of our state.

The Legislature passed a bill (**SB 5964**) to emphasize training for public officials and government-staff employees regarding public records, records-management, and open public meetings. Public officials and government staff have a fundamental duty to conduct the public’s business in the open. Elected officials and staff should well-understand that:

- Their meetings are **public**.
- Their records of **public** business are **public records**.

Opening the books on lobbying

It is long past time for a highly wired state such as Washington to set up electronic-filing standards for lobbyists. It’s the year 2014, after all!

We have long made the case that public disclosure of money in politics is critical. Citizens should be able to follow the money trail with speedier, more convenient public access to information about the political dealings of lobbyists. We led the passage in the House of a measure (**HB 1005**) that would have required that lobbyists, their employers, and our public agencies must electronically file their lobbying reports with the Washington State **Public Disclosure Commission (PDC)**.

In terms of accountability for lobbyists, this legislation amounts to what one might well define as the final public-information brick in our PDC wall. We need this comprehensive, searchable system of e-reporting.

This bill passed the House unanimously. Unfortunately, the measure died in the Senate.

Lift your glass and say cheers!

This session, a small package of bills to support our cider and wine industries, and our craft distilleries gained bipartisan approval. Two of the measures (**HB 1742 & SB 6442**) allow selected licensees to sell domestic wines and hard cider in growlers, environmentally friendly reusable glass jugs that are filled to order from a tap. A third bill (**SB 6226**) increases the annual spirits production limit, removes limits on the sale of spirits by a craft distiller and authorizes any licensed distiller to sell spirits of its own production for consumption off the premises. The measure will be a great help for Washington’s 83 distillers, which is more than any other state in the nation.



“Rep. Sharon Wylie discussing legislation on the House floor”

Transportation -- Senate's shortsighted approach hurts Southwest Washington!

These important new transportation-project proposals were not funded because no transportation-revenue package came forth from the Senate. The House passed it, but not the Senate:



- Interstate 5/Mill Plain and 4th Plain Interchanges - **\$80 million**
- (Related to project above) - SR-501-Port of Vancouver - **\$6 million**
- Vancouver SR-14 I-205 to 164th Avenue Widening - **\$37 million**
- I-5/Evergreen Choke point/Community Connector - **\$180 million**
- SR 14 to I-5 downtown Vancouver access ramp - **\$30 million**
- Port of Vancouver Rail Hub Completion Project (final 4 yrs.) - **\$22 million**
- Vancouver SR-500 Intersections at 42nd Avenue and 54th Avenue - **\$70 Million**

The supplemental transportation budget (**SB 6001**) does include a provision directing our **Traffic Safety Commission** to set up (at very little cost) a “Yellow Dot” program. We sought this program for years. A yellow decal will be placed on the lower part of the driver’s side of a vehicle’s rear window. First responders and law-enforcement folks would then know to search the vehicle’s glove compartment for an envelope containing important and appropriate medical information about the driver or passenger.

We also passed a measure (**SB 5785**) that ends the requirement to replace license plates every seven years. Instead, plates will change when ownership of a vehicle changes, but the new owner can apply to keep them. We heard from lots of people in our community and throughout the state who said changing perfectly good plates is cumbersome and unnecessary. This new law is good for drivers and good for the environment.

Another good bill (**HB 2347**) passed by the House would have improved safety for the transporting of oil. Many new terminal facilities have been proposed in our region and around Washington. The legislation sought a close look at gaps, in terms of emergency response and preparedness. We wanted to know more about the risks posed by these oil trains for our communities. There have been more than a few “near-misses.” But once again, the Senate was uncooperative and killed the measure.

Two 2013 measures remembered

Details of a couple of solid, successful bills from last year deserve repeating.

The **Department of Health** or a health-professions board or commission must summarily suspend the license of any health-care provider who is prohibited from employment in the care of vulnerable adults based upon a finding of neglect or abuse of a minor or abuse, abandonment, neglect, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

This new state law (**HB 1003**) reflects our responsibility to protect our most vulnerable citizens, elderly and developmentally delayed men and women. We must ensure that the system works to protect them. We now have a tighter process and timeline for those licensed caregivers accused of abusing people in their care.

Also, we approved a significant boost for Vancouver’s historic **Kiggins Theatre**. The new law (**HB 1001**) sets up a specific license for theaters -- as long as they have put together a good, approved plan to protect minors -- to sell beer and wine in their retail establishment for consumption on their premises.

Kiggins is an historic, single-screen theater in Vancouver. The Kiggins owner has invested several-hundred thousand dollars refurbishing it. But the theater was finding it awfully tough to compete with multiplexes.



“Speaker Pro Tempore Jim Moeller testifying in a committee hearing”



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*"Rep. Sharon Wylie with students from
St. Joseph School in Vancouver"*

Construction - Investing in lasting value and jobs

The capital budget pays for construction projects across the state. The House offered a comprehensive proposal that included investing in mental-health facilities, nutrition equipment and water-filling stations in public schools, among other projects. This \$166 million capital budget would have generated about 1,660 jobs. Unfortunately, the Senate did not agree to negotiate so, for the first time in decades, the Legislature did not pass a supplemental capital budget this session.

Another construction bill (**HB 2797**) we passed in the House sought to help make appropriate space for full-day kindergarten and K-3 class-size reduction. Our children's future in the highly competitive global economy is riding on this construction work. This new building is essential in many districts as a way to accommodate the larger enrollments. Building more classrooms is the way to meet our all-day kindergarten and K-3 class-size targets. In just our Vancouver-area schools alone, the measure would fund the building of almost 120 additional classrooms for K-3 students. It passed the House, 90-7, but the Senate refused to approve it.

Securing land for industrial jobs

As the economy has improved, making good use of our land and preparing for job growth is critical. The successful passage of the Industrial Land Bank extension (**HB 1360**) will allow Clark County to move forward with the development of land and industrial sites that can provide employment for the future. It is important that we are smart about our use of land roads and rail systems.