

2014 Update from your 3rd Legislative District Team



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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We are pleased to offer you this update on recent progress in the Legislature. We've organized the information into categories that reflect some of our highest priorities as we represent you in Olympia.

- Health Care and Wellness • Education
- Preserving the Safety Net • Jobs

We welcome input from constituents, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you ever have any questions or comments.

It is an honor to serve you.


Senator Andy Billig


Representative Timm Ormsby


Representative Marcus Riccelli

EDUCATION – OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY



Our state has a constitutional and moral obligation to fully fund a quality education for all Washington students.

We know that reforms like class size reduction, all-day kindergarten, and recruiting and retaining the best teachers possible will help students succeed in school.

We also know that the state needs to fund these reforms as well as the nuts and bolts of textbooks, technology, and the basic operating costs of running a school.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the state’s funding of education is still at least \$4 billion short of our constitutional obligation to Washington students. This year we invested \$58 million in supplies and operating costs for school districts, but the Legislature failed to make a significant down payment towards fully funding education and instead delayed action until 2015.

As a state, we have made a promise to students and their families, and we have to continue to make progress on that promise. Funding education and making sure that all students have a chance to succeed is our paramount duty and is crucial if we want a prosperous economy and an improved quality of life.



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Sen. Andy Billig:

“We are fortunate to have had good schools in Spokane, but we can and must do better. If Washington state provides the resources necessary for high-quality early learning, K-12, and higher education, we can give every child in our community the opportunity to succeed in school and in life.”

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Photo by Ryan Lancaster,
Spokane Public Schools

THE REVENUE CHALLENGE

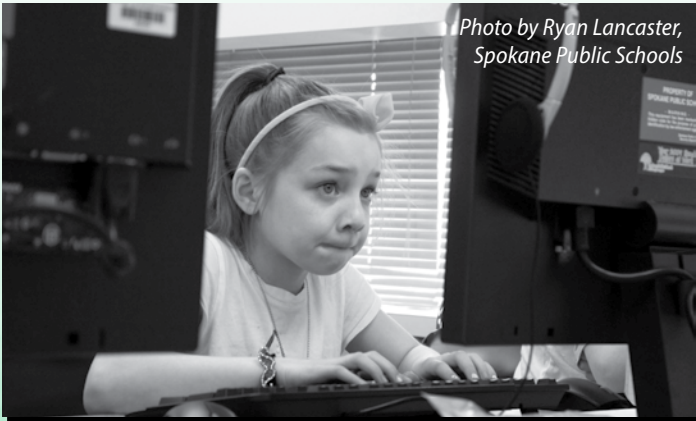
How will Washington find the additional \$4 billion investment required for K-12 education in the coming years?

We have heard from those who say, “just cut somewhere else to get the needed funding.” Unfortunately, after more than \$10 billion in budget cuts during the recession, there is very little “excess” spending left that can be cut from our already lean and balanced budget.

So, the options are to raise new revenues or cut other programs like public safety or safety net services. The problem is that cuts to these programs end up costing us more in the future and greatly undermine the very educational goals we are trying to fund. For example, if we cut housing assistance for families in poverty, we will see less success in the classroom. Kids can’t be expected to do their homework by the dome light of a car.

If additional major cuts to public safety and the safety net are not the solution to funding education, then our state will likely have to look to new revenue. Some will say, “but my taxes are already out of control.” That is a common refrain, but the facts say otherwise. State and local taxes as measured against personal income in Washington state are at a decades-long low and we are in the bottom half of all states when it comes to state and local tax burden.

Do we really want to be a low-tax, low-service state? Or, do we want to invest in the future of our children and our state? This is a critical time for our state to have a robust discussion about our budget priorities and how we achieve them, and we need your input as we head into the 2015 session.



*Photo by Ryan Lancaster,
Spokane Public Schools*



*Courtesy of
Second Harvest Food Bank*



*Courtesy of
Second Harvest Food Bank*

PRESERVING THE SAFETY NET



The social safety net represents key services that our most vulnerable children and families count on to help make ends meet and provide a pathway into

the middle class. Assistance with shelter, food and child care provides support that low-income working families count on to help stabilize their lives when they're in a tough spot.

The 2014 supplemental budget makes key investments in our safety net, particularly in mental health. The budget funds 48 additional beds in mental health care facilities and opens 200 additional slots for out-patient mental health care in communities across the state.

We were also able to provide an additional \$1 million for Emergency Food Assistance and the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program for seniors and families with infants or children in poverty, and to increase funding for Family Home Child Care and early learning opportunities for children from low-income working families.



WORKING FOR A HEALTHIER WASHINGTON STATE

Obamacare is proving to be extremely effective in Washington state, and we have implemented a successful health care exchange that is quickly and quietly signing up Washingtonians for quality, affordable, and accessible coverage. By March 31, nearly 600,000 Washingtonians had signed up for health care through Medicaid and the exchange.

This includes more than 35,000 people right here in Spokane County who were able to enroll thanks to Medicaid expansion. Previously uninsured, these men, women and children now have access to the health and dental care they need. More people can now choose a trip to the doctor instead of a trip to the emergency room, fewer people will endure medical bankruptcy, and nobody will be denied treatment because of a pre-existing condition.

But we can do even better. We're going to continue working to expand health care coverage and make it even more affordable. We will focus on innovative reforms, consumer transparency in pricing, and improving health care delivery as we strive to keep our community healthy.

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Rep. Timm Ormsby:

“The safety net is something that’s easy to write off – ‘I don’t need it, so why pay for it.’ But nobody wants to be out in the cold at night, to go hungry, or to have a developmentally disabled child who needs special care they simply can’t afford. These people are often our friends and neighbors, and the state can and should play a role in helping people facing tough times get back on their feet.”

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A FOCUS ON JOBS

The future is bright for our region and state. Spokane is rapidly growing as a regional health sciences hub, now a \$1 billion industry that employs thousands. Investments in the Riverpoint campus will make certain Spokane remains a center for health care services and medical research, and that we have the workforce to meet the needs.

However, even with all the good news our work is cut out for us. We need to continue to make targeted investments in growing sectors like aerospace, and attract new manufacturing jobs to our region. We must pass a transportation revenue package that will complete the North Spokane Corridor, help address an enormous backlog of road maintenance, and create tens of thousands of good new jobs.

Key to guaranteeing a good job for everyone is ensuring that education and job training are within reach of all. It is vital the state continues to provide funding like the \$13.3 million recently allocated to expand our local skills centers. It is clear our state and country are dependent upon a globally competitive, highly trained workforce.

We will continue to focus on investments that will grow our economy over the long term and put residents back to work.



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Rep. Marcus Riccelli:

“Our highest priority remains supporting policies and funding projects that grow and protect living-wage jobs and spur our local economy to improve our quality of life.”

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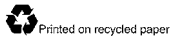


Sen. Andy Billig
Rep. Timm Ormsby
Rep. Marcus Riccelli

3rd Legislative District - Spokane
2014 Legislative Update

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LOOKING FORWARD

Sen. Andy Billig:

"I am honored to represent you as we work toward our community priorities of opportunity, safety and prosperity. I look forward to continuing to partner with my seatmates and with you to help Spokane move forward with high-quality schools, a healthy Spokane River, and a prosperous local economy. Please keep in touch."

Rep. Timm Ormsby:

"Good jobs are always at the top of my priority list. In private industry, in public service, family wage jobs provide dignity, help our economy grow, create stronger, healthier families, and improve our communities in countless ways. These things matter, and they're in my sights for the coming session."

Rep. Marcus Riccelli:

"I remain focused on job creation, protecting our most vulnerable, supporting our public infrastructure, and investing in our neighborhood schools. Your feedback and ideas are critical to ensure our shared community values are strongly represented. Together we will move Spokane forward."

3rd District Mobile Offices

Please drop by any of our mobile office events to share comments or questions with your legislators.

MONDAY, MAY 12

West Central Neighborhood
Indaba Coffee
1425 W. Broadway
4-5:30 p.m. (drop in anytime)

MONDAY, MAY 19

Logan Neighborhood
Chairs Public House
1305 N. Hamilton St.
4-5:30 p.m. (drop in anytime)

