

Report from the 45th District

Thank you

The 2014 legislative session has concluded. It was an honor and a privilege to serve you in Olympia. Sixty days was not much time to accomplish everything we set out to do: fund education, pass a comprehensive transportation package and enact revenue reform. However, despite working in a difficult political climate we had a productive session and made positive changes for Washington's families.

- **Mental Health Funding** – Our state does not have the adequate facilities or resources needed to treat those with mental illness. This session, we made major progress by investing an additional \$32.5 million into our mental health systems. These funds will help our state transform the way we treat those with mental health challenges.
- **K-12 Investment** – This session we were able to put an additional \$58 million into supplies, technology and operating costs for Washington's schoolchildren, and an additional \$2 million towards helping train new teachers, but we still have a long road to travel to fully fund our K-12 education system.
- **Developmental Disabilities** – More than 15,000 Washingtonians with developmental disabilities are on a waiting list for services. Many families have disabled children who need care around the clock. They have been determined to be eligible for help but have been unable to get it due to lack of funding. This session we provided the resources to support critically needed services for 5,000 of these families.

Larry



**Rep.
Larry Springer**

Deputy Majority Leader

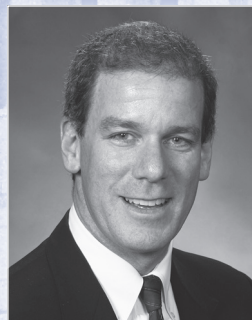
Committees: Appropriations; Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government & Information Technology; Finance; Local Government; Rules

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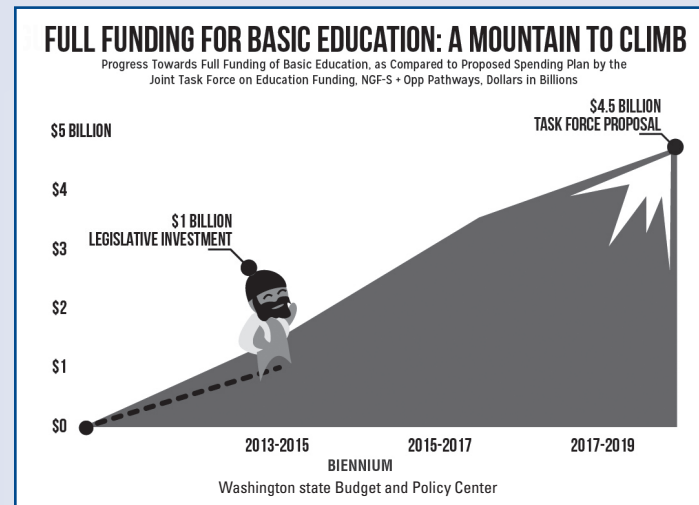
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The State Budget and McCleary

By now, most of you have probably heard about the McCleary Decision handed down by the Supreme Court. Last year, in this decision, the court told the state that we have not been living up to our “paramount duty” to “amply fund” our basic education system. In response to this, last legislative session we made a \$1 billion down payment.

As demonstrated by the graph to the right, while this amount was not insignificant, it does not put us on a clear path to increasing education funding by the additional \$3.5 billion needed by 2017. There is no practical or responsible way under our current revenue structure that we can make this investment. We MUST reform our tax system.



Saving for Retirement

This country was founded on the idea that no matter where you start out, if you work hard, you can succeed. That’s the American Dream. But for far too many workers in Washington state, and America, that dream is out of reach.

- The average American has \$3,000 saved up for retirement.
- People near retirement age have an average of \$12,000 in the bank.
- Half a million workers near retirement age in Washington State have saved less than \$25,000 for retirement.

Clearly this will ultimately put a strain on state resources as many of these families will need assistance to survive later in life. Every dollar Washington spends on services for older adults who can’t afford rent or groceries is a dollar we can’t spend on other essential services like education and public safety.

When things aren’t working, it’s time to try something new, something smarter. That’s why, this session, I sponsored House Bill 2724, called “Save Towards a Retirement Today” (STaRT). This bill would allow small businesses with up to 100 employees to enroll their workers in a simple retirement option managed professionally by the Washington State Investment Board.

Unfortunately 78% of small businesses in Washington do not offer retirement plans because they cannot find an easy system to do so. Sixty percent of small business would like to offer this options to their employees. As a small business owner I know STaRT would be a great option for other small businesses.

We all deserve to retire someday. I look forward to working on the STaRT bill again next session as a reasonable option for all hard-working Washington citizens.

Government working for you

John Bagge is a caterer from Kirkland. He works big events, sometimes two or three days in length. And as a caterer, John isn’t allowed to provide alcohol at the events he caters. He came to me in November with this problem. As a fellow small business owner I thought this situation seemed unfair and I thought... let’s solve this crazy situation.

Working with John and the state Liquor Control Board we sponsored House Bill 2680 this session. The bill allows caterers to apply for liquor licenses and serve alcohol and treat them just like restaurants.

One of the biggest complaints people have about government is that we never get anything done, or, it takes too long. John came to me with this problem late November. And today, we’ve fixed it. This common-sense fix is proof that government actually does work!

“Caterers have been hit hard by the recession,” said Bagge. “I am grateful to Rep. Springer for changing the law. It will give me and other caterers across the state the opportunity to bring in more business and increase profits.”



Safe Communities

Every day it seems we hear about another shooting at a school or shopping center. Gun violence in our country is a major concern. Forty percent of women who are murdered in this country are killed by an intimate partner, more than half of those murders are perpetrated with a firearm. Enough is enough. We need common-sense, meaningful gun safety measures, while also respecting our state’s strong firearms rights guaranteed to law-abiding citizens.

This session I was proud to be the prime sponsor of the only gun safety bill to become law – House Bill 1840. This bill aligns state law with federal law, keeping guns out of the hands of domestic violence offenders. In cases of domestic abuse, violence often peaks when the victim leaves the offender, and again when the victim gets a court to issue a protection order against the abuser. In these dangerous situations, HB 1840 will take deadly firearms out of the equation. We will now be able to

prevent these potentially explosive situations from becoming deadly by requiring domestic abusers who pose a “credible threat” to surrender their firearms while a protection order is in effect. If or when the order is lifted or if the offender is acquitted, firearms rights will be restored. This is the kind of common-sense and effective gun safety reform we need. I worked together with advocates for victims of domestic violence, the NRA, the courts and law enforcement to get this important bill signed into law!



Equal opportunity for all children

Foster children often bounce from house to house, school to school and neighborhood to neighborhood, not knowing what’s going on. In most states all foster children have legal help, but not in Washington, which ranks at the bottom of the nation in the degree of legal representation offered to foster kids. Everyone else in the foster care system has a lawyer to help them, but these vulnerable kids have no one they can trust, no one to confide in to protect their rights and help them find stability and permanency in their lives.

That’s why, for many years I’ve been working hard to get foster kids the legal help they need. This year, I’m proud to say that I passed legislation to provide troubled foster children with attorneys to help them through the process. This is not only the morally right thing to do, but it makes fiscal sense too. Research shows that foster children with attorneys to help them are placed with good families much sooner than those without. This safety and stability is best for our children, and it saves the taxpayer dollars.

Class size matters

Washington ranks an embarrassing 47th in the nation in class sizes. I have two children in our public school system and I’ve seen first-hand the adverse effects of large class sizes. My daughter’s third grade class had 33 kids. This is unfair - unfair to our children, unfair to school employees and unfair to parents. All of our children deserve a chance to succeed in school and in life. We can’t wait any longer. That’s why this year I was proud to sponsor House Bill 2589 to prioritize class size reductions throughout Washington’s public schools. Research clearly shows that student performance improves when kids are able to get the time and attention they deserve in the classroom. This only makes sense. Unfortunately, because

of cost concerns, this bill did not pass this year. But we cannot afford to wait by continuing to shortchange our children and their parents, along with the teachers, librarians, nurses and other essential staff in our schools. Rest assured, I will continue to fight for smaller class sizes for all our students.



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Revenue Reform

In order to make needed investments in education and to ensure that our state can thrive for generations to come we must have revenue reform.

Sales and B&O Taxes – Washington has an antiquated revenue system. Unfortunately, we rely too heavily on the retail sales tax and business and occupation (B&O) taxes, which are very regressive and unfair to low-income people and to small businesses. When the sales tax was enacted in 1935, our economy looked vastly different. Washingtonians spent most of their income on food and appliances. Today, consumers spend most of their income on services like healthcare, which are not subject to sales tax and did not exist when the sales tax was put in place. This is not a sustainable system for the future of Washington State. We must strive to make Washington's tax system more fair, stable and equitable so we don't punish small businesses and people with limited incomes.



Tax exemptions – Washington gives tax exemptions to a wide variety of industries. These are investments. For every dollar we invest, we see a higher return, in jobs, in innovation, in our future. But some tax exemptions have been around for a hundred years. And, since 1990 the number of tax exemptions given to businesses has skyrocketed from 333 to 648. When choosing whether to extend tax exemptions or to fund education, healthcare and public safety we must ensure we are making the most responsible choices. It's time we carefully evaluate each of these exemptions to make sure they are still smart investments for the people of Washington.

We look forward to tackling revenue reform as well as transportation, education funding and many more issues next session. Let us know what is important to you. Your opinion matters to us! Please keep in touch through e-mail, phone and in person meetings. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to serve you!