

46TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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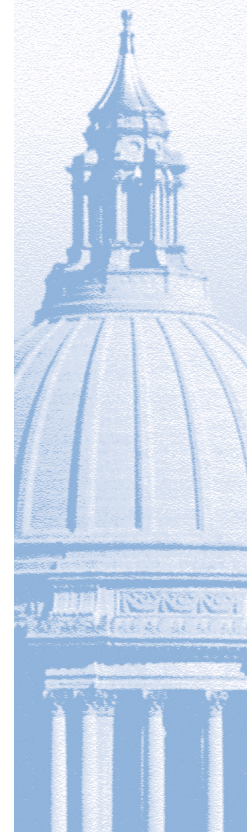


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May 2014

Dear friends and neighbors,

We are pleased to offer you this update on recent efforts in the Legislature. To save money, we are sending a single joint newsletter from the three of us to update you on the issues we're working on and the progress made in the 2014 legislative session.

Big challenges await us in 2015. We believe that we need to dramatically increase our investment for our children to succeed in school, such as lowering class sizes, increasing reading assistance, and providing all parents the opportunity to have their child in full day kindergarten. The three of us believe that we can do this while making our tax system fairer. The state Supreme Court recognized this duty to improve basic education by 2018 in the *McCleary* decision. Bold action must be taken to fund education and avoid a constitutional crisis.

Your input helps us do our jobs better, so please don't hesitate to contact any of us if you have feedback or thoughts on any of the issues facing the Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve!

Sen. David Frockt

Rep. Gerry Pollet

Rep. Jessyn Farrell

Rep. Jessyn Farrell

Minimum wage: Honest pay for an honest day's work

Our economy is stronger when an honest day's work is rewarded with fair pay. During the recovery, top earners have done quite well, the stock market has seen record highs, and corporate profits have never been better. But many have been left behind. That's why I sponsored a higher minimum wage for Washington's workers.



As families have more money it lessens the demand for government services, which saves everyone money. My proposal took a phased approach with the minimum wage increasing to \$10 in

2015, \$11 in 2016 and \$12 in 2017 with cost of living increases after that. The goal was to balance meaningful impacts to workers' pocketbooks while ensuring that businesses had the time and predictability to adapt to increased wages.

Real world experience shows that a modest increase in the minimum wage won't cause employers to shed jobs. Rather, consumer demand increases, which truly drives job creation. This idea is a win-win for workers and businesses.

Regrettably, this measure got stalled in the House Appropriations Committee. I will continue to advocate for a living wage for all working Washingtonians.

On Oil Transport

In 2013, more oil was spilled in the U.S. due to train derailment than was spilled over the last 40 years combined. Our communities have the right to know how much oil is passing through them by rail so that they can create responsible disaster plans. That's why I introduced HB 2347. This bill would have required the disclosure of information about oil shipments including how much, what kind, and the location of shipments, and incentivized safer movement of oil over our waters.

Unfortunately, while this bill was passed out of the House with bipartisan support it never received a hearing in the Senate. That said, the Legislature did appropriate \$300,000 for the Department of Ecology to study the issue of vastly increasing oil shipments over our water and railways. This is a good first step but we need to take more concrete action and I will continue to push for common sense transparency and safety measures in regards to the transportation of potentially dangerous materials across our state.

Transportation

A modest supplemental transportation budget was approved toward the end of our 2014 session.

This updated budget includes measures:

- Emphasizing strong cost-savings on projects.

- Retaining the important commute trip reduction program.
- Strengthening vital fish passage projects and requiring better cost-savings measures.
- Setting up other needed investments to bolster our transportation infrastructure.

This no-new-taxes supplemental budget keeps us moving forward in terms of protecting 47,000-plus jobs created in the overall, biennial transportation budget. Significantly, this updated budget assures that no projects will be delayed or cancelled.

To promote efficiencies, we set up programs to reduce project errors, improve design-build engineering and strengthen the disadvantaged-business enterprises office. All of these changes will result in cost-savings without hurting our environment or our workers.

Protecting Vulnerable Commuters

I have also focused on protecting our vulnerable road users, including bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. A little over a year ago we witnessed a horrific tragedy in Wedgwood when a drunk driver ran over a family in a crosswalk near Eckstein Middle School, and earlier this year Kenmore saw a pedestrian and a bicyclist killed in crosswalks within a week of each other. The Pinehurst neighborhood has also recently experienced a pedestrian-crossing tragedy. We need to reconsider how we build our transportation projects so that they are safe for every user—not just those protected by a ton of steel. I will be looking for ways to get more money into programs like Safe Routes to Schools, which helps our cities fund sidewalk and other improvements on routes to schools to keep our kids safe on their way to and from school.

Looking To Next Year

In 2015 I will continue to advocate for sensible regulations around the transportation of oil as well as a living wage for all working Washingtonians.

As we set next year's operating and transportation budgets I will continue to search for ways to deliver the most efficient and effective government services possible.

In addition, I will be pushing for a sizable investment in our children by fully funding K-12 education. As the product of local public schools, and the parent of a Seattle Public School student, I recognize that our public education system is one of the best investments we can make in the future of Washington state. The Supreme Court has spoken loudly on this issue with last year's McCleary decision – we are, by any measure, underfunding our future. Our children deserve the same opportunities we had, and they aren't getting them in our current K-12 system. This year we added \$58 million in flexible school materials funding – a nice investment, but not enough to make a dent in our McCleary obligations. We can and must do better, and next year is our best opportunity.

I look forward to staying in touch with you and continuing to serve the people of our district!

Sen. David Frockt

A Budget that Protects the Vulnerable

I'm proud to have been able to leverage my position on the Senate Ways & Means Committee to find funding for key investments in the health of our community.

The Legislature accepted an amendment I sponsored to add more than \$1 million in state and federal funding under the Bright Futures program, which is a nationally recognized health protocol to ensure all children receive the right medical screens at an early age. This particular proviso will enable many low-income kids to receive appropriate autism screens by their 18th month.

I also offered amendments to increase funding for youth suicide prevention programs and the state's Office of Public Guardianship, which provides guardians for elderly and disabled people unable to care for themselves. I advocated strongly for additional funding for mental health programs in King County and a permanent extension of a critical fee that funds over 60 percent of our state's homelessness prevention programs. We did eventually pass a four-year extension of this vital funding source.

Additionally, the governor has signed my homeless student outcomes bill that is the first piece of legislation in Washington state specifically targeted at tracking and providing more services to the 30,000 homeless students across in our public schools. I worked closely with University of Washington law students to get this bill through. I can't thank them enough for their impressive advocacy.



Education: Our Paramount Duty

Our state constitution is clear – providing a basic education for all students is our paramount duty. But as the Supreme Court's rulings have made clear, we are billions of dollars away from adequately funding the smaller class sizes, all-day kindergarten, operating costs like technology and textbooks, teacher salaries and everything else that constitute a "basic education" as defined by the Legislature.

This year I co-sponsored legislation that would have created a formal plan to implement the basic education program by 2018. The

funding of this plan is what has bedeviled the Legislature in recent years, so our bill proposed a down payment by closing about \$100 million in unproductive tax loopholes and putting the money into smaller class sizes and the voter-approved state cost-of-living salary adjustment that teachers have gone without for too many years.

Lowering class size in the early grades, providing all-day kindergarten and early learning, closing the achievement gap, providing adequate compensation to our educators, and making our local districts less reliant on local levies for basic educational expenses, will require leaders to be open to a grand compromise that encompasses budgeting reform, tax reform and new revenues.

There is no magic bullet. Neither closing tax loopholes alone nor randomly assigning budget percentages is going to get the job done. And none of this should be done in a vacuum that triggers disinvestment in our colleges and universities, in our critical social safety net or in public safety.

I believe we should all be seriously concerned about the possibility of a constitutional crisis if some legislators continue to display contempt for the court and our clear constitutional need to fully fund education by 2018. I can assure you that my dedication to finding a solution to our educational funding issues will remain steadfast.

Safe Communities

I voted for legislation this year to give courts the option to require someone who is subject to a protection or restraining order to surrender firearms. One quarter of domestic violence perpetrators who kill their spouses had been served with a protection order shortly before doing so, and many of these killings are done with firearms. This legislation will help protect victims of abuse during this volatile transition period so they are better able to start a new life free from harm.

I have also continued to advocate for better DUI laws. For example, we need to lower the threshold for habitual drunk drivers to be charged with felony DUI. Previously, I sponsored and helped pass legislation to increase penalties for DUI vehicular homicide. I strongly support our ongoing efforts to require more stringent and comprehensive use of sobriety monitoring programs and ignition interlock devices to prevent DUI offenders from continuing to endanger innocent members of our community.

Rep. Gerry Pollet

Senate Tea Party dogma stymies House majority efforts for schools, transit

This year's session was marked by clashing between the House Democratic efforts to move Washington forward and the Senate Tea Party Republican obstructionism. Nowhere was this more obvious than in our House efforts to improve our children's education and adopt a balanced transportation strategy.

The Senate refused to consider our House-passed transportation package. The package included an option for King County voters to

adopt a fair mechanism to fund Metro bus service and avoid service cuts. Unfortunately, the Senate didn't consider any new revenue for our children's education. Repeatedly, the House passed bills to make our tax system fairer by closing loopholes to generate more school funds. The Senate majority kept passing new tax loopholes, instead. Thus, sadly, we have no plan to:

- Lower class sizes.
- Improve teacher-training, pay, and retention.
- Reduce overcrowding and provide new, much-needed K-3 classrooms.

Senator **David Frock** | Representative **Gerry Pollet** | Representative **Jessyn Farrell**

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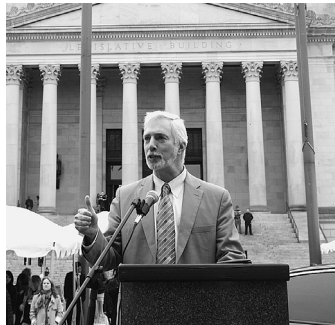


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Making college affordable

As Vice-Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, I have worked for alternatives to high-interest student loans. Students and families must increasingly rely on loans. UW tuition, for instance, has skyrocketed to more than 20 percent of the average family's income. The House twice passed language I drafted to set a goal to reduce tuition. The Senate stripped language stating: "The cost of tuition should not be a barrier for any resident" to earn a degree.

I've worked with the Seattle-based Economic Opportunity Institute on the "Pay It Forward" concept allowing students to attend college without paying tuition or getting a high-interest loan. Instead, they'd agree to pay one to three percent of their income for 20 years. Payments would then provide funding for the next generation of students for college. A teacher earning \$40,000 would pay \$4,000 less per year than under current student loans! Next year, I expect we'll make progress adopting this program.



Gerry was named "Legislator of the Year" by the Washington Student Association, celebrating his work improving access to higher education. Here he's speaking at a rally for improving college access and the "DREAM Act."

Operating government in "sunshine"

People should feel confident that government decision-making is conducted in the "sunshine." Public officials and staff must understand the right of the public and news media to see public records. All too often, however, people elected to a city or some other office are unaware they must not meet in private or make public decisions out of the public eye.

I've worked with Attorney General Bob Ferguson on open-government legislation. The successful measure provides elected officials and staff basic training in open-government duties.

Ensuring that our neighborhoods have proper notice of developments

Neighborhoods in our 46th District have faced development of monstrous "backyard skyscrapers" and other out-of-scale buildings. Incredibly, Seattle didn't even require basic notice to neighbors about permit applications and decisions. Until bulldozers showed up, residents didn't hear about neighborhood character destroying, sun blocking, slide zone and tree cutting developments! Further, state law forbids appeal after 21 days from permit issuance—time which is already passed when the bulldozers show up.

I want fair notice for neighbors and community groups to participate in decisions impacting our neighborhoods. I introduced, with Rep. Gael Tarleton from the 36th District, a bill guaranteeing notice. This led to a commitment from the new chair of the Seattle City Council's Land Use Committee to close that notice loophole.

Lake Washington and Magnuson Park: Protection from dioxin, radioactive contamination

The Department of Ecology (DOE) has confirmed elevated levels of dioxin in Lake Washington sediments north of Log Boom Park. Testing didn't find dioxin south toward the Lake Forest Park Civic Club beach. I'm working with my 46th District colleagues for funds for the department's sampling to find the contamination source. Meantime, pollution from numerous sources requires health advisories against eating area fish.

At Magnuson Park, the Navy is removing radiation from the soccer and sports club area. However, the Navy plans to leave residual radioactive contamination far above cancer risk standards for cleanup at toxic waste sites. Research by the citizens' group Heart of America Northwest and I question the Navy's public presentations. The Navy called radiation levels "low." But we found the Navy failed to disclose levels of radiation equivalent to 1,200 full-body X-rays per year for a hypothetical person sitting on the ground! The Navy and DOE haven't responded to last summer's public comments. I'm asking for another public meeting.

I will update you on progress.