

24th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT REPORT - 2014



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Dear neighbors,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve as your state legislative delegation. It's a privilege to work for you and to act as a voice for your communities in Olympia.

The 24th District is a large geographic area that includes all of Clallam and Jefferson counties, as well as parts of Grays Harbor County. Doing a joint newsletter saves printing and postage costs, and cuts down on the amount of mail you receive. This report contains three main features:

- Our individual reports to you
- Great news about sole community hospitals that will benefit the district
- Highlights of the job sustaining supplemental transportation budget

We hope you find this report informative. As always, please don't hesitate to call or email us if you need more information, have questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,


Senator Jim Hargrove


Representative Kevin Van De Wege


Representative Steve Tharinger



SENATOR JIM HARGROVE

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2014 SENATE COMMITTEES:

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

2014 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS



BIPARTISAN BUDGET

For the first time since 2009, the Legislature was able to pass a budget on time and without a special session. As the lead budget negotiator for the Senate Democrats, I have been working day in and day out with members from both sides of the aisle. The 48-1 vote in favor of this budget were the most ‘yes’ votes a budget has ever received in the Senate. That vote is a reflection of good compromises made on both sides of the aisle and also a reminder of what we can accomplish when we work together. Here are some of the highlights from this year’s supplemental operating budget:

- No new tax increases or tax breaks
- Invests \$58 million in K-12 facilities, books and other materials in the 2013-15 biennium and adds \$146 million next biennium
- Enhances mental health services by adding 48 involuntary commitment beds
- Freezes tuition for resident undergraduate students for the second straight year
- Protects the safety net

It is noteworthy that this is the first session in recent memory that we were able to pass a budget that didn’t add any new tax loopholes. I think that is important considering we need to add \$1.5 billion more for basic education in next year’s budget. Even though we were able to add some funding for our education system we still have a long way to go if we are going to meet our obligation to the McCleary ruling.



STRENGTHENING OUR MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Communities are safer and healthier when our citizens have access to high quality mental health services. In addition, funding mental health services keeps people out of jail; incarceration is the most expensive way to treat people. This year we added nearly \$31 million to mental health services – that will go towards 48 extra treatment beds that will help those who have been involuntarily detained receive the help they need.

SUPPORTING THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

Washington’s economic success relies greatly on its timber industry. This year a proposal passed the Senate that would reduce the tax burden logging transportation businesses face. Many logging businesses are small, family owned, and provide good wages. We’ve cut taxes for Boeing; timber businesses deserve the same treatment so they can stay competitive and successful. Although this bill didn’t pass this year, I will continue to work on protecting important jobs in the timber industry next session.



ADDRESSING TEEN SUICIDE

Teen suicide is a growing and heart-breaking problem in Grays Harbor and the Peninsula. I sponsored legislation this past session to assist schools, identified as high-risk for youth suicide, in implementing prevention programs. Schools are encouraged to create partnerships with local community members and organizations interested in preventing youth suicide so that we can all work together to combat this completely preventable problem.



REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN VAN DE WEGE

MAJORITY WHIP

Website: www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-kevin-van-de-wege

2014 HOUSE COMMITTEES:

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

2014 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTING HEALTH AND SAFETY



Toxic, cancer-causing chemicals are often in the furniture in our homes and common children’s products, such as car seats and changing pads. Chemical companies say the products increase fire safety, but an investigative report last year found this was not true – in fact these chemicals put consumers’ and firefighters’ health at risk. It is for these reasons that I continued my push to ban these carcinogens with The Toxic-Free Kids and Families Act.

This reform would get our state off the “toxic treadmill” once and for all by banning two forms of Tris, a known carcinogen, and by prohibiting the substitution of equally toxic chemicals in their place. Regrettably, this measure did not make it out of the Senate this year. I will continue to make this bill a priority moving forward.

WASHINGTON TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism in Washington is an industry with incredible growth potential. Washington’s outdoor recreation industry alone (not the whole of our tourism market) is responsible for \$22.5 billion in consumer spending, \$7.1 billion in wages and salaries, \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue, and directly supports 227,000 jobs in the state. This doesn’t include all the ‘indoor’ recreation and tourism that Washington offers.



In an effort to help promote this growth industry we passed **HB 2229**, which concerns long-term funding for a state tourism marketing program. The measure directs several state agencies to work with the Washington Tourism Alliance to present a report to the legislature by December of this year about how we could best promote tourism on a long-term basis.

This is a pro-growth idea that will benefit the tourism industry in the 24th LD and across the state. Finding new innovative ways to sustainably leverage our prized environmental treasures will bring jobs and prosperity to Washington.

STATE MARITIME HERITAGE AREA

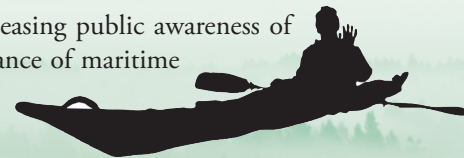


From the Pacific Ocean to the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Puget Sound, Washingtonians are defined in no small part by their relationship to the sea. From the canoe culture of many native tribes, to the giant container shipping vessels we see every day in our ports, our economy and way of life is inextricably linked to health and sustainability of our maritime heritage.

I was proud to sponsor **HB 2386** which would have designated the state’s saltwater coast as the state maritime heritage area.

A State Maritime Heritage Area would promote tourism by honoring the area’s significance, increasing public awareness of the importance of Washington’s waterways to its history and development, and recognize the significance of maritime industry to Washington’s economy: past, present, and future. This bill does all of the above, without introducing any regulations.

I’m hoping that next session we can get this important tourism boosting measure passed into law.





REPRESENTATIVE STEVE THARINGER

Website: www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-steve-tharinger

2014 HOUSE COMMITTEES:

- Finance (*Vice Chair*)
- Appropriations
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
- Environment
- Health Care & Wellness

2014 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS



LONG TERM CARE

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 more work must be done to address the spectrum of issues this population faces. The Joint Legislative Executive Committee on Aging and Disability, which I co-chair, is focusing on these very challenges.

Alzheimer’s Disease

Alzheimer’s disease is the third leading cause of death in Washington. We must have a plan in place to assist those who develop Alzheimer’s, as well as for the caretakers who see to their everyday needs.

With this in mind I was happy to support passage of **SB 6124**. This measure requires the Department of Health to convene an Alzheimer’s disease working group. This group will examine the array of needs individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer’s face, services available to meet these needs, and the capacity of the state and current providers to meet these and future medical necessities.

We should do all we can to ensure that those who have developed Alzheimer’s have access to the care and services they require.

Adult Family Home Licensing

Adult Family Homes (AFH’s) are community-based facilities licensed to care for up to six individuals who need long-term care. These homes provide room, board, laundry, necessary supervision, and assistance with activities of daily living, personal care, and nursing services.

This session I made it priority to modernize some of the provisions that govern AFHs to make them more accessible to those who use them. Now, DSHS may allow a one-time waiver of all or part of the licensing and processing fees for an adult family home if payment of the fee would represent a hardship to the applicant. The Department may also extend the timeframe for an applicant for an adult family home license to complete administration and business planning class requirements.

Community First Choice Option

This year I helped secure \$364,000 dollars in the 2014 Operational Budget to expand the Community First Choice Option program in Washington state. The Community First Choice Option is a program to support people to “age in place” – in home and community based settings. To be eligible, clients must be assessed as needing nursing facility level of care and must have income that falls below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

The Community First Choice Option will allow Washington to receive additional Medicaid funding from the federal government. This will help us prepare, plan, and increase access for long term care for our elderly and vulnerable constituents.



EDUCATION WINS!

The Supreme Court has reminded the Legislature of its paramount duty to fully fund our K-12 education system. And while this session did not see us reach that bar, there were some significant victories on the education front.

Materials, Supplies, Technology

\$58 million in new funding will go toward school supplies, technology, and operating costs. This additional investment will count toward our McCleary obligation.

New Teacher Mentoring

\$2 million will go toward enhance mentoring for beginning teachers.

Para-educator development

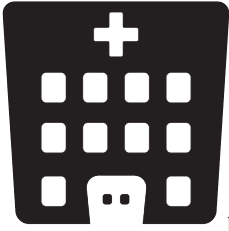
\$459,000 will go toward improving paraprofessional minimum employment standards, professional development needs, and seamless pathways to a teaching certificate.

Opportunity Gap

\$245,000 will be allocated to implement some of the recommendations of the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Commission such as cultural competence professional development, a clearinghouse of best practices with suspended students, and an English Language Learner workgroup.

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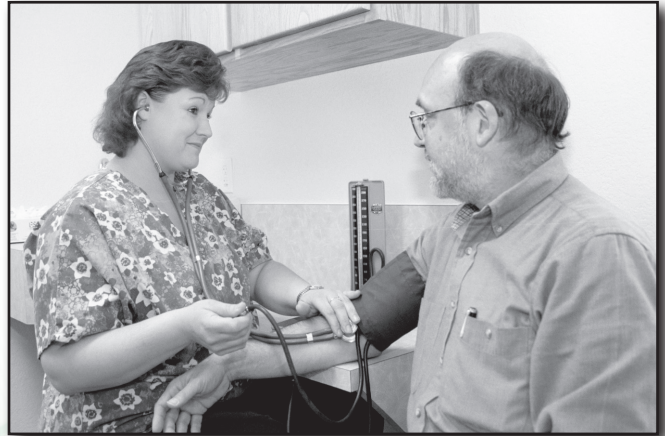
RELIEF FOR COMMUNITY HOSPITALS



Grays Harbor Community Hospital and Olympic Medical Center both provide vital medical services to the people of the 24th Legislative District. Both hospitals were hit hard by the recession and have had to make difficult cuts. Both are still struggling financially. We believe that providing protection for our community, our elderly and our most needy citizens is a high priority. Everyone deserves access to high-quality healthcare; without these hospitals our community would have nowhere to go.

This year we worked hard to pass legislation that will increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for certain hospitals designated as “Sole Community Hospitals”. By doing so, a significantly higher reimbursement rate from state and federal governments is provided, stabilizing their bottom line. In order to get SB 5859 passed and funded in the budget, it had to apply only to public hospitals, and Grays Harbor Hospital is not a public hospital. A measure on the upcoming August ballot to form a Public Hospital District will allow voters to decide whether or not to make it a public hospital. The legislation does not require a local tax assessment to get the increased state funding.

This bill is about more than keeping hospitals running and local; it’s also a jobs package. Olympic Medical Center and Grays Harbor Hospital, combined, employ nearly 1,850 people. We also saw the need to protect these jobs and keep these people working.



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MODEST SUPPLEMENTAL TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

This was the first session since the recession where we found our state facing a positive revenue outlook. This allowed us to continue to make key investments in job rich sectors like transportation. A modest supplemental transportation budget was approved toward the end of our 2014 session.

This updated budget includes measures:

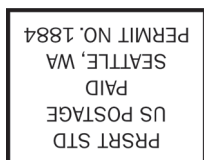
- Emphasizing strong cost-savings on projects.
- Retaining the important program for commute-trip reduction.
- Strengthening vital fish-barrier projects.
- Funding for construction of a new 144 car ferry
- Setting up other needed investments to bolster our transportation infrastructure.

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.

In terms of reforms and efficiencies in the updated transportation budget, we set up programs to promote far more efficient construction practices and reduce project errors. The 2014 Legislature called for changes in transportation-project delivery, and design-build engineering. Also, the program for disadvantaged-business enterprises will result in transportation projects built cheaper and more efficiently -- without hurting our environment or our workers.

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