

LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2015

Dear Neighbors,

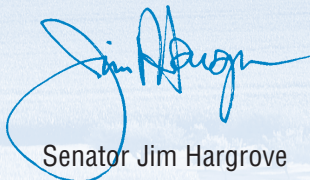
It continues to be a privilege to serve as your state legislators. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to make sure your voice is heard in Olympia.

This newsletter will give us a chance to discuss the 2015 session. The negotiations were challenging but we overcame partisan divide and passed a budget that works for the 24th District and the state. As the economy continues to improve, we were able to start making new investments and fund programs that will make Washington more sustainable and viable for years to come. These include:

- Historic investments in K-12 education and early learning
- Class size reductions for grades K-3
- Funding for all-day kindergarten
- Lowered college tuition rates
- Comprehensive mental health care funding
- Restored funding for habitat and salmon restoration projects
- Fully preserved state food and emergency food assistance programs
- Critical investments into state parks
- Implemented a 16 year transportation plan

We hope you find this report useful and informative. As always please do not hesitate to call, write or email our respective offices if you need more information, have questions or concerns, or want to provide feedback.

Sincerely,



Senator Jim Hargrove



Representative Kevin Van De Wege



Representative Steve Tharinger



Senator
Jim Hargrove

Jim.Hargrove@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40424
Olympia, WA 98504-0424
(360) 786-7646

520 East 1st Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362
(360) 457-2520

Legislative Assistant:
Shawn O'Neill



Representative
Kevin Van De Wege

Kevin.VanDeWege@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7916

64 Village Lane
Sequim, WA 98382
(360) 582-9830

Legislative Assistant:
Linda Barnfather



Representative
Steve Tharinger

Steve.Tharinger@leg.wa.gov

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7904

Legislative Assistant:
Leanne Horn



Senator **JIM HARGROVE**

Working for a bipartisan budget

It's always been my belief that legislators need to ignore party labels when it's time to sit down and write the state's two-year budget. This year had its share of challenges and it took far too long, but I'm proud that we finished

with a budget that starts to move our state forward again. When the session started, the Senate Republican majority insisted we did not need any new revenue to make necessary investments and balance the books. In the end, we were able to invest about \$850 million more into the state thanks to a positive revenue forecast and a few tax loophole closures. As the lead budget negotiator for the Senate Democrats, I worked every day on budget solutions that represent our district's values. I also continued to focus on assistance for the most

vulnerable in the state – people suffering from mental illness, developmental disabilities, domestic violence victims, abused children, and the poor and sick.

As the Legislature gathers next January for the 2016 session, many challenges remain. The biggest task left unfinished this year is the complex issue of levy reform, which we are required to do by the state Supreme Court. The fact that teacher salaries are overly reliant on local levies is a core issue for why we have inequality across our districts. I helped craft a proposal introduced in the Senate that would lower property taxes for the vast majority of people in the state while also fixing the broken levy system. This proposal did not advance this session, but it provides a solid framework for future work. Our kids in the 24th District deserve a quality education and our families could use some tax relief. I remain committed to fixing a system that simply isn't equitable for kids and families in rural parts of the state.

Honoring our veterans

We should never forget the men and women who sacrificed everything for our country. A four-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 101 will now become Medal of Honor Highway, honoring four veterans who received the Congressional Medal of Honor. I was pleased to sponsor this legislation honoring the sacrifice these men made for their country. This stretch of highway will help our community remember the service of these courageous Americans.

Tax relief for log truck drivers

I worked hard this session to give logging truck drivers much needed tax relief. These drivers work long hours, receive modest pay, and are a crucial piece to one of the biggest industries in our region. With fewer mills and longer hauls, it's common sense to give this industry and these workers a little relief.

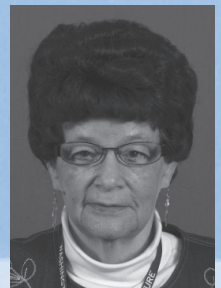


Improving safety

Keeping the public safe is the most important job of the Legislature. I was proud to sponsor and pass legislation that strengthens our state's response to domestic violence. The bill makes a number of updates and works to prevent domestic violence and ensures victims have the support they need. I also sponsored and passed legislation to update our sexual offender laws. These updates improve reporting procedures to increase community safety. One effort that I worked on but did not pass this year was a bill to reduce property crimes in our state. This effort will be resumed next year.

Thank you, Patsy

Twenty-three years ago, I made one of the best decisions of my career. I hired Patsy Feeley as my Legislative Assistant. For more than two decades, Patsy has dedicated her career to helping the people of the 24th Legislative District. As she retires, I want to thank her for the loyal service she has provided.



Port Angeles office hours

Our Port Angeles District Office will be open the first and third Tuesday of the month from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Please don't hesitate to stop by with any questions or concerns. We look forward to seeing you.



Investing in our children and our future

Due to a volatile and regressive tax structure, the state has been underfunding education and relying on local levies to pay for our schools. Since the state Supreme Court has ruled that basic education needs more funding, lawmakers knew that this year we would have to make serious investments in the future of our children. In order to do so, we needed more revenue. We lucked out, with more money coming in than expected from our traditional taxes. But that still wasn't enough to make all the investments we needed: early learning, all-day kindergarten, fully funding the day to day costs of operating our schools, and funding the teacher cost of living increases voters approved years ago.

Thanks to a bipartisan agreement with the Senate to close corporate tax loopholes and exemptions that weren't con-

tributing to the economy, we are finally on the right track to fully funding basic education. With the additional revenue, we passed the largest increase in education funding in the state's his-

tory, in addition to investing in our future by lowering the cost of tuition for all students across the state.

Early Learning—We need to give our children, rich or poor, a chance at a better life. More than half of our children start the first day of kindergarten behind in math, language, and social-emotional skills needed to succeed, setting them up to fail. Kids need to walk through the door on the first day ready to learn and high quality early learning makes that possible. It's a smart investment: The state gets back \$4-7 for every dollar we spend on quality early learning, which reduces the need for special education, remedial teaching, lowers the drop-out rate, and reduces the need in the juvenile justice system.

That's why our budget invests more than \$159 million in early learning and expands the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). We're also stabilizing Working Connections Child Care eligibility so our working parents can give their children the best opportunity

for success. The Early Start Act is the cornerstone of the early learning package, which improves the quality of care in early learning centers and child care programs across the state. We're also making a big advancement in bringing the Early Achievement Program to all child-care programs that are subsidized by the state. Early Achievers provides training and a common set of standards to childcare programs to make sure young learners are ready for kindergarten. Together these two programs help increase stability for families by keeping them in the same facility for 12 months and provides a more consistent education program to ready them for the future.

Public schools (K-12)—We're on our way to meeting our constitutional obligation to fully fund public schools. This has been a huge step in the right direction with a \$1.3 billion investment that will reduce class sizes for grades K-3, funds all-day kindergarten, and covers the basic costs of our schools. Our teachers are also getting a long overdue cost of living increase, with an additional increase on top of that, because you can't pay low wages and expect high quality work from our educators.

Our funding efforts in student transportation, supplies and operating costs, and the rest of our education budget are the right start. But we're not done yet. In future sessions we need to address how we fund schools, moving away from reliance on local levies. Where you live shouldn't be the determining factor on whether your school is properly funded. Every child deserves the same great education at their local public schools, so tackling that problem is an important task.





Representative **STEVE THARINGER**

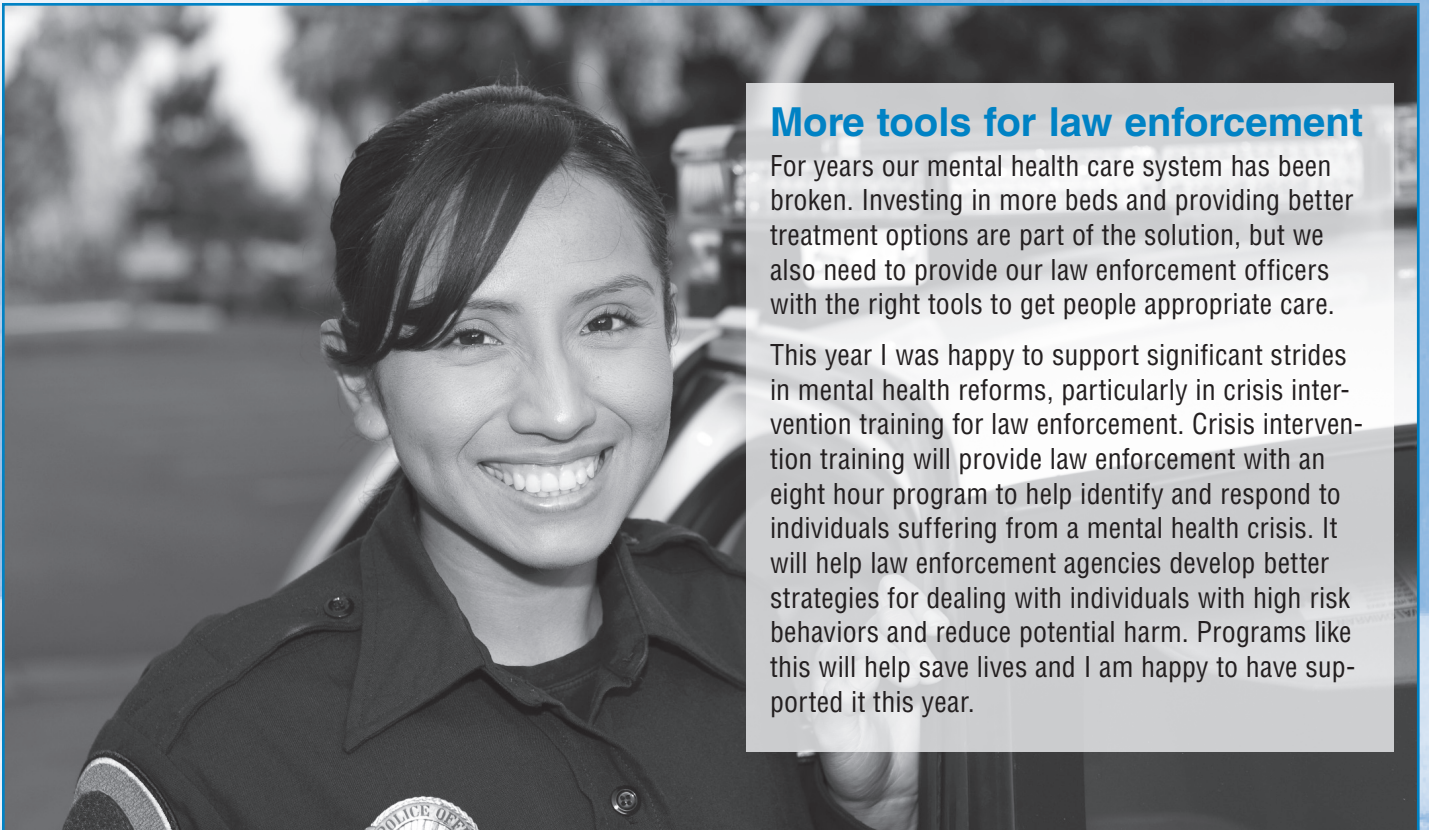
Keeping jobs in our marine trades

This year a lot of our focus as a legislature was investing in the future, and for me that meant creating additional and

expanding economic opportunities and jobs in Washington. One area I saw a clear need was in the marine trades, a huge industry for our communities. Previously, nonresident vessels could be permitted to work in our waters for up to sixty days. When they left, the money left with them—money from jobs and economic investments that we need. The marine trade industry use tax exemption I championed will recapture up to \$30 million in taxable revenue back to our state. How the exemption works is it allows nonresident vessels to operate in Washington state waters for an additional sixty days, allowing boat owners more time to repair and service their boats with our businesses. Giving nonresident vessel operators the additional time, and waiving the use



tax, allows marine trades to continue their jobs for longer duration of time with fewer interruptions and bolsters the local economy when they spend their money on our goods and services. This is a sensible investment for local jobs in our district.



More tools for law enforcement

For years our mental health care system has been broken. Investing in more beds and providing better treatment options are part of the solution, but we also need to provide our law enforcement officers with the right tools to get people appropriate care.

This year I was happy to support significant strides in mental health reforms, particularly in crisis intervention training for law enforcement. Crisis intervention training will provide law enforcement with an eight hour program to help identify and respond to individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. It will help law enforcement agencies develop better strategies for dealing with individuals with high risk behaviors and reduce potential harm. Programs like this will help save lives and I am happy to have supported it this year.

Building a Better Washington and 24th District

This year the legislature worked together to pass a new construction budget that makes serious investments in our children and grandchildren that will affect us all for decades. The new capital budget will create up to 44,000 jobs from the building of schools, mental health facilities, parks, and university buildings with a \$3.9 billion budget.

Education is the largest part of the capital budget including \$900 million for public colleges and universities, \$626 million for school districts to build elementary, middle, and high schools, and \$200 million for more classrooms in K-3. And we're making serious investments in fixing our state's mental health care system, which the court has told us is broken and unconstitutional. So we've included \$30 million in grants for local mental health services, more capacity at Western State and Eastern State Hospitals, new evaluation & treatment facilities, and plans for a new 700-bed mental health treatment facility.

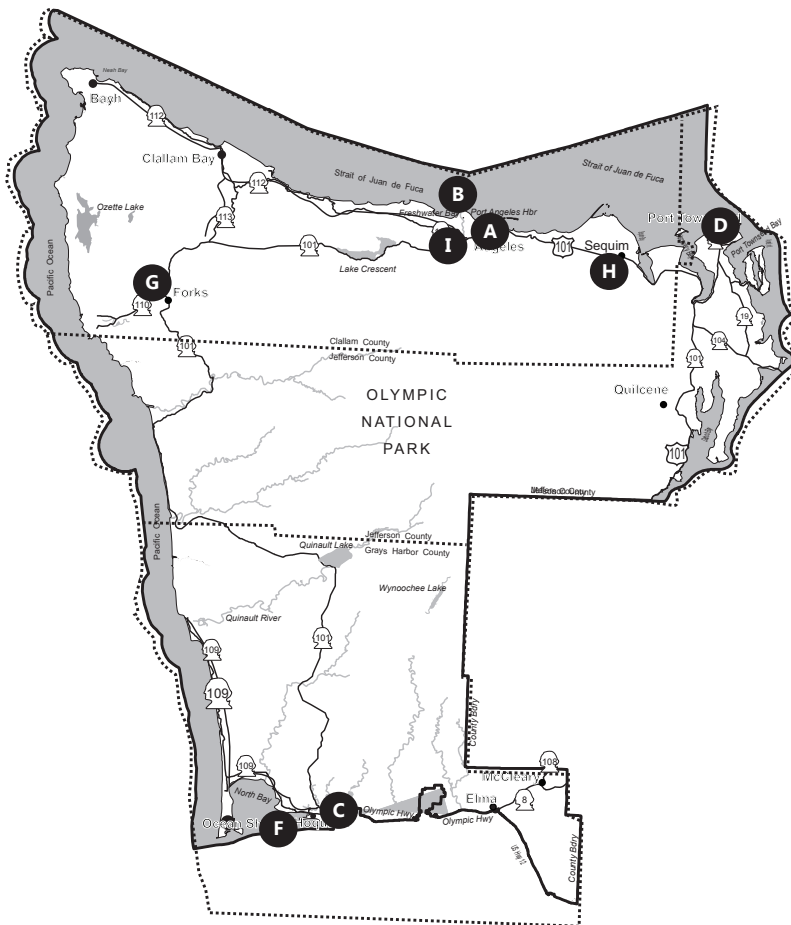
We're also putting more money into housing projects, with \$100 million in Housing Trust Fund projects, weatherization for homeowners, and community energy efficiency programs. And we're investing over \$400 million in cleaner water, wildlife and recreation programs, state parks, floodplains, and coastal restoration grants.

Here in the 24th District, a number of projects have been funded that will improve many of our local facilities and infrastructure. One such facility is the Guy Cole Convention Center in Sequim.

For years, city officials and local activists have sought a funding source to revitalize Guy Cole. With maintenance issues and a need for serious remodel, our capital budget secures \$450,000 in funding to improve the facilities including getting the kitchen up to code, improving the acoustics, meeting spaces, and making it a more attractive venue to hold meetings, parties, weddings, community meals and fundraisers for up to 300 attendees.

Investing in the Olympic Peninsula

The 2015 Legislature approved a \$3.5 billion Capital Budget for infrastructure improvements across the state. Here's a look at significant projects approved in the 24th Legislative District.



- A** **\$23.8 million** for Allied Health and Early Childhood Development Center at Peninsula College.
- B** **\$10 million** for environmental clean-up efforts on the Port Angeles waterfront, including \$7 million for a project to remove garbage from an eroding bluff at the now-closed Port Angeles landfill.
- C** **\$2.6 million** to assist Grays Harbor PUD in the clean-up of the shuttered Harbor Paper mill.
- D** **\$2.3 million** for improvements at Fort Worden State Park.
- F** **\$2 million** for the Grays Harbor Navigation Improvement Project for improved vessel traffic at the Port of Grays Harbor.
- G** **\$1 million** to construct a new building at the DNR's Olympic Region headquarters in Forks, replacing a structure lost in a Jan. 2013 fire.
- H** **\$450,000** for the Guy Cole Center in Sequim.
- I** **\$227,000** for Civic Field lighting replacement.

Sen. Jim Hargrove
Rep. Kevin Van De Wege
Rep. Steve Tharinger

24th Legislative District
2015 Legislative Report

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SEATTLE, WA
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PO Box 40424
Olympia, WA 98504-0424



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Senator **JIM HARGROVE**

- Ways & Means
(Ranking Member)
- Human Services, Mental Health & Housing

Representative **KEVIN VAN DE WEGE**

House Majority Whip

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Commerce & Gaming
- Health Care & Wellness
- Rules

Representative **STEVE THARINGER**

- Finance (Vice Chair)
- Health Care & Wellness
- Appropriations

Better Access to Higher Education

All three of us were focused on making sure we not only funded basic education, but that we also did the right thing for our higher education students as well. This year we made major improvements to our higher education system, including more scholarships and reduced tuition rates for university and community colleges, expanded degrees in engineering and cybersecurity at Peninsula College, and more computer science education statewide.

All college students will receive a 5 percent tuition reduction for the 2015-2016 school year, with UW and WSU students

receiving an addition 10 percent reduction, and students at all other schools will receive an additional 15 percent reduction in the 2016-2017 school year. We're also proud of the \$41 million in scholarships for high-demand majors in science, technology, engineering, math, and health care that will be available to students all across the state.

These investments ensure a stronger, brighter Washington where students get the quality education they deserve and our economy gets the skilled workers it needs to help our state lead in the 21st century.