



# Washington State Legislative Report to the 38th District

Spring 2016

Dear Friends:

The 2016 legislative session wrapped up in late March and we are taking time to offer a quick report on the accomplishments and challenges that remain.

A supplemental budget, like the one the Legislature passed in March, is intended to make modest adjustments and corrections to the two-year budget we passed last July. This year we made progress on a number of issues, from expanding opportunities for all our K-12 students to investing in housing for the growing homeless population in our state.

We have a lot of work ahead of us on these and other important issues to our friends and neighbors in the Everett, Marysville, Tulalip and Snohomish County. We are honored to have the opportunity to serve you. Thanks for taking a few minutes to read about what we are working on in Olympia.

Sincerely,



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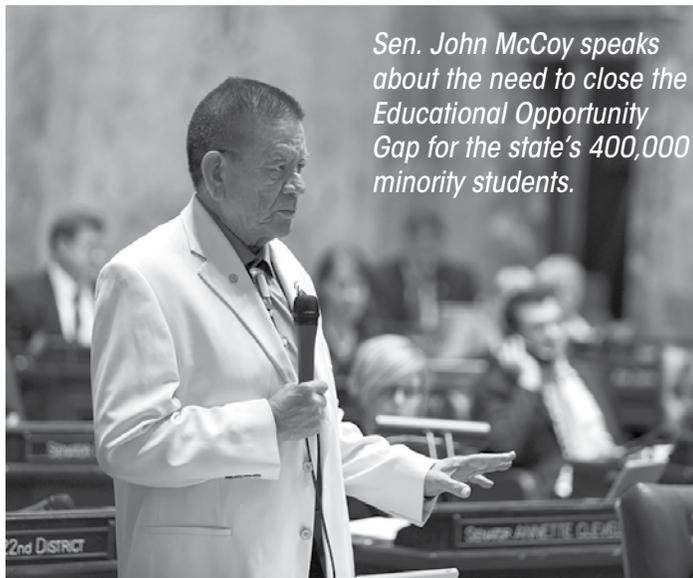
Labor & Workplace Standards (Chair)  
Higher Education  
Transportation

## Education

### Closing the Educational Opportunity Gap

One of the biggest highlights of 2016 was the passage of **HB 1541**— a measure that puts the state on the path toward bridging the cultural disconnect between educators and students of color. Many of us have spent years working to convince our Republican colleagues this was essential to improving outcomes in our state. Strategies include reducing the amount of time students of color are excluded from school due to suspension, increasing the cultural competence of educators, and endorsing all English language learner educators.

We are proud to say lawmakers will be able to leave Olympia this year knowing that the more than 400,000 minority students in Washington have more hope for a fair chance at success in the classroom.



*Sen. John McCoy speaks about the need to close the Educational Opportunity Gap for the state's 400,000 minority students.*

### K-12 Education and looking ahead

There's modest progress to report on K-12 education funding in 2016. Small investments were made (\$7m) to attract and retain teachers due to the alarming teacher and substitute teacher shortage in the state, but the salary increases Gov. Inslee and Democrats pushed for were not included in the final budget.

Progress was short on the overall effort to answer to the state Supreme Court over the lack of state funding for schools. The Legislature passed a bill to commit itself to solving the problem

in 2017. It's a missed opportunity as we had the chance to make more meaningful progress. It's also disappointing that our students, teachers and families will still feel threatened by levy rate decreases set to occur in 2018. If the Legislature fails to fill the funding gap by next April, schools potentially face the biggest education funding cut in state history.

The budget also includes \$4 million to keep the state's 1,200 charter students in their schools next year.

We face big challenges in 2017 as the Legislature works to comply with mandates of the Supreme Court's McCleary decision, which ruled the state is underfunding basic education. We must repair a levy system that unfairly determines the quality of a child's education.

We will continue to voice our support for a fair way to amply fund our public schools as we move closer to next year's legislative session.

### Higher Education

This year we secured \$580,000 in the Supplemental Operating Budget to continue expansion and growth of WSU North Puget Sound at Everett. It was the only 4-year university that received money in this year's budget for a new program. Starting next year, students in our area will be able to enroll in WSU's Organic Agriculture Systems degree program, which will assist in the development of locally driven food and agricultural systems that are already rapidly transforming the Western Washington food supply chain.



## Healthy Families and Safe Communities

### Testing and tracking every rape kit

Thousands of rape kits are untested in Washington. To get through the backlog and get justice for victims, we passed a law last year to require that every rape kit be submitted for lab testing within 30 days of collection. This session, the passage of **HB 2530** will establish the first statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System in the nation. It will enable law enforcement to track every rape kit, which will help with their criminal investigations, but will also allow victims to anonymously track and receive updates on the status of their kits.

## Confronting rising homelessness



Everyone should have a safe place to sleep at night, but all across the state the homeless population is rising. A January 2016 census revealed that homelessness has risen 54 percent in Snohomish County. It's not just

adults who are homeless, over 35,500 students in Washington are homeless. We address the growing homeless crisis in Washington state by investing in more emergency residential services and beds throughout the state; providing more resources to local governments to help more homeless people transition into permanent housing; and investing in programs that prevent youth homelessness.

Additionally, the Legislature passed the Homeless Student Stability Act, which will increase identification of homeless students and the capacity of the school districts to provide support.

## Mental health

Washington's mental health system is broken. People facing mental health crisis and their families are trying to navigate a broken system with inadequate resources. Patients and staff are unsafe in underfunded mental health facilities. This year we increased investments in mental health services including additional state hospital staff, mobile crisis teams, and crisis triage beds.

The legislature also needs to address the needs of children with mental health challenges to reduce future demand for treatment.

Research shows that more than half of adult mental health problems begin before the age of 14. Children who get early intervention services are less likely to drop out of school, experience homelessness and be unemployed. We passed **HB 2439** this session that establishes the Children's Mental Health Work Group to identify ways to increase access to mental health services for children and families. All children deserve a strong developmental foundation; for some children this will require extra support and services.

## A Better Life Experience program (ABLE Act)

Saving for college and other expenses is important for everyone, but can be difficult for individuals with disabilities. Many individuals with disabilities rely on Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income, but if you have more than \$2,000 in savings, you can lose access to those programs. Not being able to save money can be a barrier to education programs, independent

living and other important life experiences. To solve this problem, we passed the ABLE Act (**HB 2323**), which will allow families to invest up to \$14,000 a year in a savings account and withdrawals won't be taxed as long as the money is spent on needs such as housing, education, transportation, health care, and other related expenses.

## Toxic Free Kids and Families Act

Families in Washington need to know that the children's products they buy and furniture in their homes is safe and won't get them sick. Unfortunately, many products contain "flame retardant" chemicals that are toxic and have serious health consequences – cancer, ADD/ADHD, learning deficits, infertility, and more. After many years of working to ban some of the most dangerous flame retardants, this year we finally passed the Toxic Free Kids and Family Act (**HB 2545**). The Act bans the use of five toxic flame retardants in children's products or residential furniture. This change will provide safety and peace of mind for Washington families.



## Community Policing Standards for a Better Washington

When someone is shot or killed, and the law doesn't offer pathways to clear justice for the shooting victim or the officer involved, it does damage to the community, to the reputation of law enforcement and to the notion of justice. **HB 2908** will reinforce trust for safer communities by creating a joint legislative task force to review current laws, practices and policies regarding the use of deadly force. It will present its recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2016.



*Rep. Mike Sells speaks on the House Floor on the importance and need of the Equal Pay Opportunity Act.*

## State trooper recruitment and retention



There is both a recruitment and a retention problem at Washington State Patrol. With 9 voluntary retirements in 2009 and 35 in 2015, and with nearly 40 percent of troopers eligible for retirement in the next decade, the WSP is

struggling to attract and keep good officers. In part, it's because many local law enforcement agencies pay higher wages than WSP. Under **HB 2872**, troopers, sergeants, lieutenants and captains will receive a 5 percent bump in pay this summer. And an additional raise next year based on the results of a salary survey to identify the average pay of Seattle Police, King County Sheriff, Snohomish County Sheriff, Tacoma Police, Vancouver Police and Spokane Police Departments.

## Fighting Opioid Addiction

The Department of Health manages the Prescription Monitoring Program, an online system to keep track of the number and types of prescriptions dispensed in Washington. Doctors access this information to watch for signs of abuse by their patients, like shopping around for the same drugs from multiple providers. But the registration process is lengthy, so only 30 percent of Washington prescribers are using it. **HB 2730** allows healthcare facilities to sign up as entities, so the prescribers employed there can use the system without having to go through the registration process individually. This new law will help keep drugs out of the wrong hands and allow doctors to provide better, more objective care.

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***But there is still more work to do to build a Washington that works for everyone. Looking forward to 2017 and beyond, here are a few of our priorities:***

## Equal Pay Opportunity Act

Countless studies show that women nationwide are paid less than men for the same jobs. Female doctors earn 71 percent of what their male colleagues make. Minority women in Washington earn 49 cents to every male's dollar. Gender shouldn't define a person's value and worth. But a major problem that perpetuates the wage gap is that workers fear retaliation from their employers if they discuss compensation. The Equal Pay

Opportunity Act (**HB 1646**) would have banned employers from retaliating against their employees for discussing wages and salaries, allowing transparency in hiring and salary practices for everyone.

## Pregnant workers

Expectant mothers in every corner of the state still face discrimination at work. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (**HB 2307**) would have required employers to provide reasonable accommodation in employment for pregnancy-related health conditions. Simple changes like allowing cashiers to sit or extra bathroom breaks, can allow a woman to safely work longer into her pregnancy and have healthier babies in more financially secure homes.



*Representative June Robinson speaking on the House Floor in support of her bill to increase access to birth control for women.*



## Access to birth control

Many insurance companies require women to go to the pharmacy every month to refill a birth control prescription. For women who live in rural areas or in areas without access to a pharmacy, just getting their prescription filled each month requires lengthy travel. This is an unnecessary burden that can lead to missed doses and unintended pregnancies.

**HB 2465**, sponsored by Rep. Robinson would have required insurance plans to reimburse for a 12-month supply of contraception, instead of forcing twelve separate trips to the pharmacy throughout the year. Unfortunately, this bill did not pass, leaving many women without consistent and convenient access to medication.

## Holding aerospace companies accountable for tax breaks



The aerospace industry is a critical economic engine for our state. Historically it's employed more Washingtonians in good well-paying jobs than any other field. In 2013, the Legislature passed the largest tax break in state history aimed at securing production of the Boeing's 777X line and the jobs that come with it. But since then, Boeing has announced multiple rounds of layoffs in Washington, resulting in the loss of more than 5,000 jobs to date, with many more job losses on the horizon. In many cases, those positions were even relocated to states where tax breaks were tied to increasing jobs — a provision Washington's tax breaks didn't include.

Unfortunately, we were unable to pass two measures ([HB 2638](#), [HB 2994](#)), sponsored by Rep. Robinson that would have tied Boeing's tax break to the number of jobs it keeps in this state. Holding large corporations accountable to the taxpayers is an important step towards building an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few.

## Transportation Budget

Last session our state passed the first transportation package in over a decade. This session we approved an \$8.6 billion Supplemental Transportation Budget that will continue to help fight gridlock, improve mobility, and keep our roadways safe.

This year's budget formally combined the I-5/Marine Drive and SR 529/I-5 Interchange projects. The new project is now titled "I-5 Peak Hour Use Lanes and Interchange Improvements." By consolidating these projects, we'll speed up completion and create efficiencies that will lead to a conservative cost-savings estimate of \$2.5 million.

Other projects include improvements to I-5 interchanges at 156th Street NE, 116th Street, and 88th Street, to make these heavily used interchanges safer and help with traffic flow.



For more information on the transportation projects in our area, please go to: <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetTProjList.aspx>, and select *Group by: Legislative District*, then hit *View Report*.

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## Capital Budget

Last year's Capital Budget included \$54.6 million for the WSU Academic Building at the Everett University Center to house current and projected degree programs by WSU and its partner institutions. We are pleased to report that construction for this project began in September and its completion is expected by the spring of 2017.



This year's Supplemental Capital Budget continues investing in Washington state's infrastructure – creating jobs and supporting the needs of our local communities.

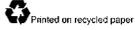
Two of the projects included in the budget will address homelessness in Everett and Snohomish County:

- Funding for Everett's Low-Barrier Housing project will be used for a facility to provide housing and mental health services for chronically homeless individuals.
- Funding for Cocoon House, which serves young people in Snohomish County through outreach, housing and prevention, will be used to redevelop their main center to provide a full-service drop-in center and add additional beds to increase their housing capacity.

For more information on the construction projects in our area, please go to: <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetCSuppProjDetail.aspx>, and select *Group by: Legislative District*, then hit *View Report*.

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Representative Mike Sells

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