

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE BERGQUIST

■ Encouraging life-long voting habits

Citizens who vote as soon as they reach legal age will likely be regular voters throughout their lives. Two of my bills this session were designed to encourage participation at the polls by young people, to build the habit of good civic engagement. One would authorize the Department of Licensing to pre-register 16- and 17-year-olds when they applied for their driver's license; they'd be automatically eligible to vote on their 18th birthday. The other would expand pre-registration by 17-year-olds, who can currently sign up online via the Secretary of State's office, to let them do so by other means as well.

Despite support in the House, neither has become law . . . yet. Sometimes the wheel of progress turns slowly, but I am confident these common-sense measures will succeed, and I'll reintroduce both next year.

■ Bringing year-round tennis to South King County

Playing tennis is one of the best and most effective ways of achieving and maintaining physical fitness. Unfortunately, there is no large-scale indoor public tennis facility in all of South King County. To remedy that, I introduced legislation authorizing a special Washington Tennis license plate. Proceeds from sales of the plate will be dedicated to the construction and operation of a four-court indoor facility for use by the public, and our region's tennis players will no longer have to hang up their racquets when wet weather shows up. The Washington Tennis plates go on sale January 1, 2017.



It was a special privilege to hold my newborn son, Anton, with my wife, Dr. Avanti Bergquist, and daughter, Anjali, looking on as Gov. Jay Inslee signed my Washington Tennis license-plate bill into law.

2016 Legislative Review

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 1885

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
STEVE BERGQUIST
11th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
STEVE BERGQUIST

11th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

2016 Legislative Review

Dear neighbors,

The 2015-16 Legislature has adjourned, and I'm happy to be home again with family and friends in the 11th district. We got a lot of important work done, but plenty remains for when we pick up the reins once again next January.

I've prepared this brief wrap-up to give you an idea of what went on during the session, and to offer a preview of next year, which promises to be historic. That's when we'll take the last big step toward fully funding public education – the state's paramount constitutional duty.

I hope you'll take a few minutes to look through this newsletter. More important, I hope you'll contact me with questions and comments. It's a privilege to work for you and your family; to do the best job possible in Olympia, I need to know what's on your minds here at home.

Best,

Steve

Olympia office:

322 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Direct office line:

360-786-7862

Toll-free Hotline:

800-562-6000/ TTY

Web page:

[www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/
roster/rep-Steve-Bergquist/](http://www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-Steve-Bergquist/)

Email: steve.bergquist@leg.wa.gov

- Improving public schools for our kids
- Straightening out the I-405 mess
- Increasing access to higher education
- Strengthening our mental-health system
- Encouraging life-long voting habits
- Bringing year-round tennis to South King County

■ Improving our public schools

The state constitution is clear: “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex.”

As a parent, a teacher, a taxpayer, and a lawmaker, those words mean a lot to me, and every day I hear from constituents who feel the same way. Great public schools are key to preparing our kids to compete in a global 21st-century economy, as well as rebuilding our eroding middle class.

The Legislature has invested more than \$4 billion in our K-12 schools since the state Supreme Court ruled that we weren’t fulfilling our paramount duty. We’ve now fully funded student transportation, as well as supplies and operating costs in our schools. The Legislature has expanded all-day kindergarten and reduced K-3 class sizes.



Our district has great schools, like Raisbeck Aviation High School where motivated students can focus on the science, technology, engineering and math skills that are vital to so many careers today. I want every child to have a great school in his or her neighborhood.

This year we passed legislation to eliminate the opportunity gap that has penalized students of color and low-income kids. We’ve instituted programs to educate homeless students. And to prepare for the final and largest step in complying with the Supreme Court’s ruling, we put it into statute that by the end of

the 2017 session we would agree on a plan to end the reliance on local levies to pay teachers.

Solving that long-standing problem will cost as much as \$4 billion in our next budget. Every lawmaker, Republican or Democratic, knows that can only be accomplished by fixing our state’s deeply flawed tax structure. That’s a tall order, and if this newsletter does nothing else, I hope it solicits the best ideas from everyone who reads it. What happens in the next session will affect you, and your opinion matters. Please let me know what you’re thinking.

■ Straightening out the I-405 HOT lane mess

I-405 runs right through the heart of the 11th legislative district. For many of us, it’s our Main Street, the artery that brings people and goods here, and takes us from here to almost everywhere else. As we know all too well, that artery has gotten more and more restricted as our region has grown over the last several years.

Ironically, things got worse when state transportation officials introduced a number of changes that were supposed to ease congestion. It was quickly obvious to most drivers that the experiment had just the opposite effect.

Even before the changes took place, I sensed that we were about to have a huge problem on our hands, and began working on ways to mitigate the impending mess, or eliminate it altogether. I introduced legislation (HB 2289) last year that would reopen the HOT lanes to free travel for 2+ carpools at all times, and to open all toll lanes to free travel between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m. regardless of the number of passengers.

Earlier this year I cosponsored a separate bill that included even more ideas to free up traffic – including making it easier to enter and exit the HOT lanes.

I’m happy to say that my cosponsors and I were successful, and without having to put another law on the books. Thanks to pressure from the Legislature and from private citizens alike, the Washington Department of Transportation announced in February that they’d be making a number of changes consistent with our legislation. Those changes became official in March.

Even while declaring victory, I realize that problems still plague I-405. As our region has grown, the number of drivers has increased accordingly. We can only expand the highway so far, and we need to keep working on ways to keep traffic flowing safely at a reasonable pace. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I’ll continue to monitor DOT’s efforts, and will guard against unintended consequences that only make matters worse.



■ Increasing access to higher education

As a teacher, I try to instill in my students a desire to get all the education they can, whether that means going for an advanced university degree or preparing for their chosen career at a community or technical college like Renton Tech. But the hard fact is, college is too costly for many Washington students, even after the Legislature froze, then lowered, tuition at our public colleges and universities.

Too often a potential student’s options are either postpone, often forever, their education, or rack up a student-loan balance that can cripple their economic lives for decades.

For years Washington’s Guaranteed Education Tuition program provided another path. But when we lowered tuition, it penalized families whose GET units now were worth less than they’d paid for them. New enrollments in the program were suspended last year.

To save GET I proposed a key amendment to a Senate bill this year. My amendment was approved by the Legislature and a new, improved GET program will be in operation next year. With the GET savings plan once again secure, we can turn our attention to other ways to make higher education affordable and accessible.



■ Strengthening our mental-health system

Washington’s mental-health system is in crisis. The Legislature addressed this in multiple ways in 2016.

- We created the Children’s Mental Health Work Group to identify ways to increase access to mental-health services for children and families.
- HB 1713 allows for involuntary hospitalization of persons in the throes of substance-abuse crises.
- HB 1448 helps police get people who are potentially suicidal the mental-health care they need, before a tragedy occurs.
- We nearly doubled (to \$63 million) the funds dedicated to upgrading and expanding mental-health facilities.
- We created a joint select committee of representatives from the executive and legislative branches to oversee the state’s mental-health hospitals, including the troubled Western State Hospital.