

19th Legislative Session Report



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Changes in Olympia

As you may have heard, there have been changes in your state leadership in the 19th Legislative District. In September, Sen. Brian Hatfield stepped down after more than two decades serving in Olympia. He's already hard at work in his new position working to bring rural economic development to the state.

Sen. Dean Takko was appointed to fill the 19th Legislative District senate seat on Oct. 22 after more than a decade in House of Representatives. Taking his place in the House is Rep. J.D. Rossetti, a member of the Longview School Board and the Pathways 2020 Board. The appointments were made by commissioners of the five counties in the 19th District: Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Lewis, Pacific and Grays Harbor.



Sen. Dean Takko



Rep. Brian Blake



Rep. JD Rossetti

Spring 2016

Dear neighbors,

How can we work together to improve local schools, create jobs and build a better Washington for our kids?

This newsletter is our chance to update you about major issues that affect our families and businesses back home. Inside, you'll find updates on education, jobs, natural resources, health care and transportation.

We're happy to report that the House and Senate finished work on March 29, passing a new state budget that invests in housing and mental health along with a construction budget that will put people with hard hats and shovels to work, building a better Washington.

This is also a chance to hear directly from you. If you have ideas, questions or comments, please get in touch.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and thank you for the honor of representing you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Sen. Dean Takko

Rep. Brian Blake

Rep. JD Rossetti



EDUCATION



Every child deserves a great education and a chance at the American Dream.

But our local schools don't get the funding they need, so kids in Aberdeen, Raymond or Longview don't get the same education as kids in public schools in Bellevue or Issaquah.

The state Supreme Court ruled in the McCleary case that this is unfair and unconstitutional.

We've been fighting for our local schools.

In the current two-year state budget (2015-2017), we added \$3.2 billion in new funding for public schools. Improvements include more all-day kindergarten, state funding for local school buses and more teachers in kindergarten through third grade, where research shows small class sizes matter most.

There are still problems to solve:

FIXING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE — Low pay and high turnover are making it hard for school districts to hire enough qualified teachers. The House passed legislation ([HB 2573](#)) to ramp up teacher recruitment, encourage retired teachers to return to the classroom as mentors and advisors and offer additional financial aid to new teachers.

REDUCING THE BURDEN OF TESTING — Our state can also do a better job of fixing the way we test students. The House passed a bill to reduce the burden of testing on students and teachers. This session, we passed legislation ([HB 2366](#)) to push toward fully funding all schools in the next two-year budget.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESS STUDENTS — About 35,000 kids in our public schools are homeless. That's tragic and we have to act. We put funding in both the operating and construction budgets to help these kids. We also passed legislation ([HB 1682](#)) that creates a grant program to better connect homeless kids with stable housing and help our school districts get a handle on this problem.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

HELPING THE DISABLED GET AROUND MORE EASILY

[HB 2847](#), by Rep. Rossetti, removes some of the red tape and financial barriers to make it easier for disabled people to get access to waterways. Currently, to build wheelchair ramps on or near a shoreline you need a permit, and the process can be both expensive and time-consuming. Under this new law, people can avoid those costs, time and paperwork, and will be able to get around more easily near shorelines.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

By addressing the mental health needs of children, we can reduce the future demand for treatment. [HB 2439](#) will establish the Children's Mental Health Work Group to identify ways to increase access to mental health services for children and families. All kids deserve a strong developmental foundation; for some, this will require extra support and services. By reaching children and their families early on, we can make a difference in the overall mental health picture for our state.

CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Seniors, and their families, have a right to know what they will pay when entering a continuing care retirement community. We have 26 of these communities in our state and by passing [HB 2726](#) to bring transparency to the costs and fees a resident is subject to, as well as establishing important expectations for residents, families will have better peace of mind about the future of their loved ones.

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.

A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE (ABLE) ACT

Saving for college and other expenses is important for everyone, but can be difficult for individuals with disabilities who rely on Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income because, if they have more than \$2,000 in savings, they could lose access to those programs. The ABLE Act ([HB 2323](#)) will allow families to invest up to \$14,000 a year in a separate account, and withdrawals wouldn't be taxed as long as it's spent on needs such as housing, education, transportation, health care, and other related expenses.

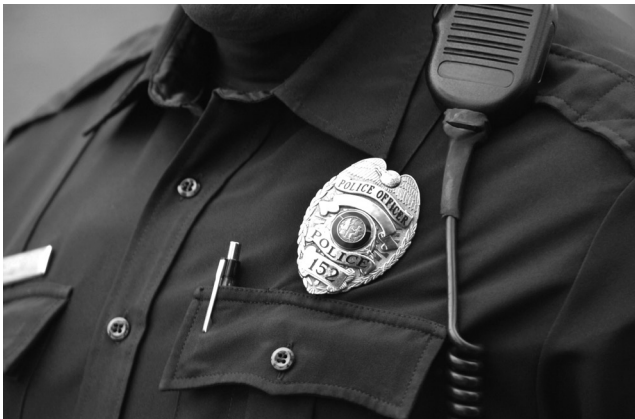
A SAFER WASHINGTON

TESTING AND TRACKING EVERY RAPE KIT

Last year, the Legislature passed a law to get through the thousands of untested rape kits backlog and get justice for victims. This session we passed [HB 2530](#) to establish the first statewide sexual assault kit tracking system in the nation. It will enable law enforcement to know where each kit is at any given time, and will allow victims to anonymously track and receive updates on the status of their kits.

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.

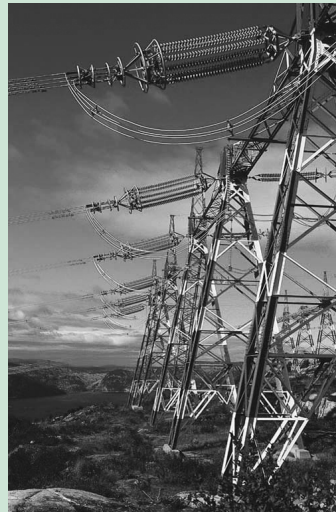


STATE TROOPER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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.

STRENGTHENING THE MIDDLE CLASS

INCREMENTAL ELECTRICITY AS AN ELIGIBLE RENEWABLE RESOURCE



By bringing incremental biomass generation under the umbrella of renewable energy sources in Washington, [SB 6166](#), sponsored by Sen. Takko, is good for both the environment and jobs. It will not only help protect over 1,000 jobs in the 19th Legislative District, but it will have low impact on our environment by requiring no new land or water use for utilities scale power generation, better utilizing our existing transmission lines, and will help replace nonrenewable coal and gas sources of electricity production.

LOCAL BUSINESS TAX AND LICENSING SIMPLIFICATION

Some small businesses find the process of paying local and state B&O taxes confusing and time consuming. We want to help make it easier for them, so we passed [HB 2959](#) to set up a task force with businesses, cities and the Department of Revenue to come back with legislation in 2017 that will create an online tax and licensing portal.

Unfortunately, two important bills that passed out of the House and would have helped Washington's workforce did not get the support of the Senate. We will continue fighting for these issues:

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. [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

Expecting mothers in every corner of the state still face discrimination at work. [HB 2307](#) would have required employers to provide reasonable accommodation in employment for pregnancy-related health conditions, unless the accommodation imposes an undue hardship on the employer's business.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

NASELLE HATCHERY



The new state budget restores some of the draconian 38 percent cut to the Willapa Bay hatchery system by boosting production at the Naselle hatchery by 2 million chinook. We fought hard for this and it's a big victory for all our families who fish and for the increasing number of tourists who come to the 19th District and spend money at our local stores because we have some of the best fishing in the region.

FOREST RESILIENCY BURNING



Severe drought, low snowpack and poor forest health conditions contributed to the worst wildfire season in state history in 2015. Prescribed outdoor burning can be a valuable tool to combat forest health problems and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, when balanced with protecting air quality in nearby communities. [HB 2928](#) creates a pilot project on forest resiliency burning in one of our most fire prone regions to help maintain ecosystems, mitigate wildfire potential and improve forest health.

PROTECTING POLLINATORS

Bees play a vital role in our food supply, pollinating more than 70 percent of the food we eat. As we get rid of the noxious and invasive weeds that harm our environment, we've been unintentionally taking away a main source of food for honeybees. To encourage healthy bee populations, [HB 2478](#) starts a pilot project to replace invasive weed species with high-pollen plants, focusing on state lands first to ensure we are helping improve bee forage on public lands.



FREE HUNTING LICENSES FOR GUARD MEMBERS



[HB 1351](#), sponsored by Rep. Blake, is a powerful statement that recognizes our service members by requiring the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to issue small game hunting licenses, supplemental migratory bird permits, and big game hunting licenses to resident active full-time members of the Washington State Guard or the National Guard at no charge.

HEALTHY, LOCALLY-PRODUCED FOOD

[HB 1685](#), which passed House last year but died in the Senate, would have established the Washington Food Policy Forum. This public-private partnership would get us on the path towards better food policy. The forum was to look at all of our food policies, from farm to table, and address issues including reducing hunger; ensuring that all families have access to nutritious food; preserving and promoting Washington-grown foods; and addressing obesity and chronic diet-related diseases through nutrition. We made the funding request for it again this session and are happy to report that the final Supplemental Operating Budget includes \$50,000 to get the Food Policy Forum started.



CONSTRUCTION BUDGET



BUILDING A BETTER WASHINGTON

Construction workers around Washington state will be busy after the passage of a new state construction budget to build classrooms, mental health facilities and affordable housing.

Highlights include:

- Building schools—\$34.5 million for K-3 class size reduction grants and \$34.7 million for the School Construction Assistance Program.
- \$1.8 million in emergency disaster response.
- \$28.9 million to support the state's mental health system.
- \$70 million in student housing and other projects at state community and technical colleges.
- \$8 million in new funding for the Housing Trust Fund.
- \$2.5 million toward the Homeless Youth Grant Program, with an estimated 35,000 homeless students in our public schools, and \$2.25 million for Supportive Housing and Emergency Shelters.

CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER MEANS JOBS—AND FEWER WILDFIRES

We don't have a cross-laminated timber market in Washington, but supporting one would create jobs, keep our forests working, address the ongoing forest health crisis, and reduce the danger of wildfires. CLT is manufactured from small diameter fiber, which is the wood that is removed in forest health treatments.

An active CLT market would save the state money in forest fire prevention and suppression costs. Washington is well positioned to take advantage of this growing market, so Rep. Blake sponsored [HB 2857](#) to help jumpstart this new industry. While the bill did not pass out of the House, \$5.5 million are included in the Supplemental Capital Budget for a pilot project to build classrooms with CLT.

WESTPORT DREDGING PROJECT

Westport Marina, Washington's largest commercial seafood landing port in both value and volume, was expanded in the late 1950s and has not been dredged in over 35 years. It requires dredging to meet the demands of hundreds of commercial fishing vessels and thousands of pleasure boaters each year. The Supplemental Capital Budget includes \$200,000 for dredging operations that will remove accumulated sediment to restore appropriate drafts for vessels throughout the marina.

ABERDEEN GATEWAY CENTER

The entrance to downtown Aberdeen will get a huge boost with the construction of the Aberdeen Gateway Center, which will serve four purposes: as one-stop shopping for businesses looking to start up or move to Grays Harbor, as a convention and community center, as a central location for tourist information and as a showcase building for cross-laminated timber.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Last year we passed a \$16 billion transportation plan that included \$110 million for Cowlitz County, \$25 million for the Hazel Street project and \$85 million to reduce rail and vehicular congestion in Longview's Industrial Way/Oregon Way corridor.

This year's Supplemental Transportation Budget includes the advance of \$900,000 from allotted funds for the **South Kelso Rail Crossing** into the 2017-2019 biennium. Designed to help ease rail and traffic congestion in the area, this move will ensure all necessary permits are completed before the construction phase of the project is set to begin in 2019.

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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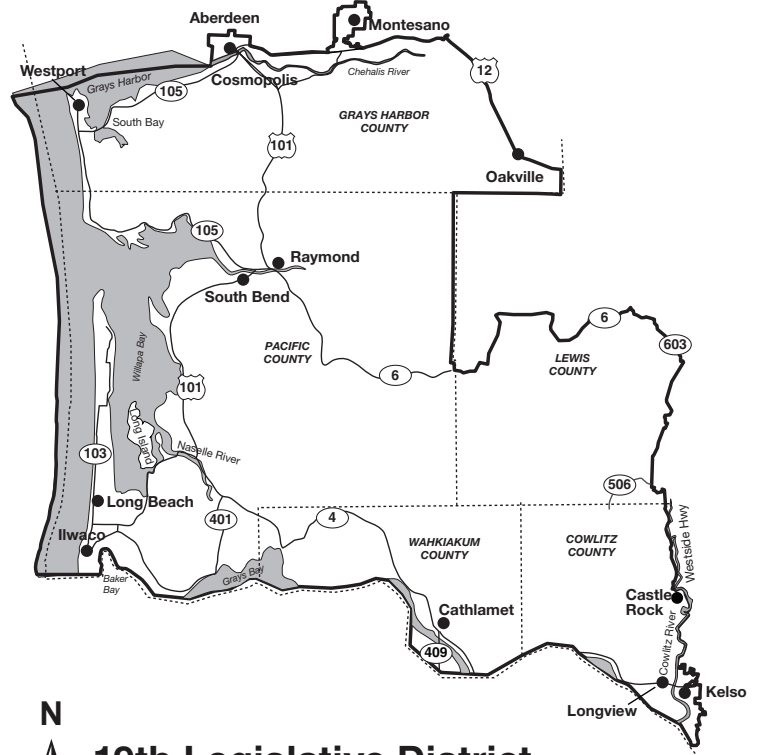
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