



Legislative Report

to the 49th District

State Representative
Sharon Wylie

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Dear neighbors,

We finally wrapped up the special session on March 29th and I am glad to be back in Vancouver to continue working on the issues that matter to you.

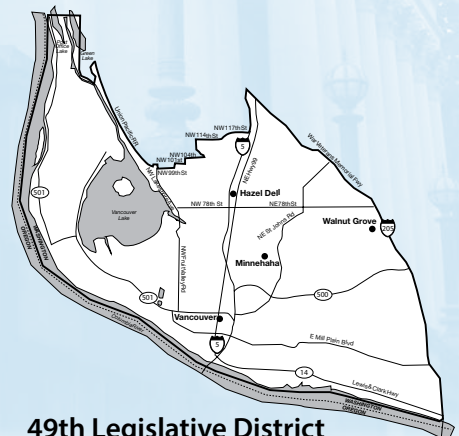
This newsletter includes highlights on some of the most important things we accomplished in Olympia on major issues that affect our families and businesses back home.

The biggest news, of course, is that we have a supplemental budget that invests in many of the priorities of our state: addressing the teacher shortage, tackling important parts of our mental health system crisis, and investing in our communities.

Although the supplemental budget did address many of the priorities essential to the overall state, I was unable to support the final version because of critical gaps that impacted the SW Washington region. I am hopeful that some of those gaps can be addressed next session and am working on interim solutions.

Thank you for keeping in touch and for taking the time to read this report. And thank you for giving me the honor of representing your interests in our state capital.

Sincerely,



49th Legislative District



State Representative Sharon Wylie - 49th Legislative District

EDUCATION

How do we fund our schools?

The biggest issue this year was the question of how to fund our schools as required by our constitution and the Supreme Court. How do we move away from funding so much of our school costs through local property taxes? This practice is the crux of the problem that allows the unconstitutional inequality, and we all agree it must be rectified by the state.

But it's very hard to reach a spending agreement when the specific sources of funding are not identified. Instead of waiting until next year—the real deadline for action—to figure this out, the House and Senate did agree on a plan ([SB 6195/HB 2366](#)), which the governor signed, that creates the Education Funding Task Force. I am looking forward to hearing back from the task force on:

- Hiring and retaining staff.
- Whether to incorporate a local labor market adjustment formula.
- Local maintenance and operations levies and local effort assistance.
- Local school district collective bargaining.
- Funding method for school employee health benefits.
- Sources of state revenue to pay for basic education.

Closing the Opportunity Gap

We passed [HB 1541](#) to implement various recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, including critical changes to school discipline policies, cultural competence training for school staff, bilingual education endorsement requirements, more deeply disaggregated racial and ethnic data, stronger transitions from early learning to kindergarten, as well as creating an integrated student support system.

Addressing the teacher shortage

Low pay and high turnover are making it hard for school districts to hire enough qualified teachers. We passed [SB 6455](#), which implements strategies that include a campaign targeting select groups to enter the teaching profession, financial incentives, streamlining certification for out of state teachers, expanding ability of retired teachers to become substitutes, mentoring for new teachers, and expanding alternative routes to the teaching profession.

Homeless students

Did you know that about 35,000 kids in our public schools are homeless? That's tragic and demands action. We passed [HB 1682](#), which improves education outcomes for homeless students through increased in-school guidance supports, housing stability and identification services. It also provides grants to schools with high populations of homeless students to partner with housing agencies. I worked to fund and expand on this proposal last year and this year it was successful. I will be looking to expand on this success to help our students and schools next session.

Charter schools

The Legislature passed [SB 6194](#) the last day of the regular session. You'll recall that voters passed the charter school initiative in 2012 and the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional last year. This bill authorizes and funds up to 40 charter schools over the next 5 years.

I did not vote for this bill because, first, I don't believe it is good policy to divert your public dollars from our budget to fund private charter schools prior to having a solution to our primary obligation, which is to fully fund public, basic, K-12 education. And secondly, I don't believe this bill fixes the problem, in fact, I think this "solution" will be found unconstitutional again and we'll go back to square one.

A SAFER WASHINGTON

Testing and tracking every rape kit

Thousands of rape kits are untested in Washington. To get through the backlog and get justice for victims, last year we passed a law 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



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will also allow victims to anonymously track and receive updates on the status of their kits.

State Trooper recruitment and retention

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 other law enforcement agencies.

Community policing standards

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 the end of this year.



MY 2016 VICTORIES

Marijuana

As vice chair of the Commerce and Gaming Committee, I've had to deal with many issues surrounding our marijuana laws. I became aware of a couple of problems that required technical solutions, so I sponsored two measures necessary for the proper functioning of our marijuana laws. Both bills were signed by the governor:

- Currently, qualifying patients and medical marijuana cooperatives are allowed to cultivate marijuana

plants. However, patients and cooperatives have no lawful means of acquiring plants, insofar as marijuana producers may not sell plants at retail. **HB 2520** will remedy this problem by allowing producers to sell plants to members of cooperatives.

- And **HB 2521** authorizes the Liquor and Cannabis Board to develop rules to allow marijuana retailers to properly dispose of marijuana products. It is a common sense approach to implementing the I-502 framework.

Construction projects in our area

The Capital Budget supports bricks and mortar projects for communities across our state. This is the year of small budget adjustments and needed response to changes that affect the two-year budget passed last year.

- I am pleased to report that, with the help of Representatives Moeller and Harris, we secured \$750,000 for the Bridgeview Education and Resource Center project, which assists families in escaping poverty through partnerships with schools, the Boys and Girls Club, the Housing Authority, and various health and employment services.
- We also got \$1,000,000 to fix the roof to preserve the Mother Joseph Academy Building. This was a supplemental budget allocation that adds to the capital projects for schools and the Vancouver waterfront investments from last year.



These projects will ensure our community moves forward with jobs and development for the future. They are major recognitions of the planning and foresight of our local leaders and businesses.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Columbia River Crossing

I teamed up with members of both parties in the House to try to move toward a new effort to address the I-5 bridge corridor. My bill (**HB 2414**) to develop a process within the Legislature to address this issue was similar to one we passed out of the House last year, which died in the Senate. My purpose in sponsoring this bi-partisan bill was to signal our readiness.

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But, this year, there was a clear and early response that the Senate would not support our effort within the short session. Without further conversations with each other and with stakeholders, it makes more sense to work during the interim to garner the necessary support and understanding when we come back for the long session in January.

Tax relief for seniors

My property tax relief bill for low income seniors and veterans (**HB 2759**) would have made medical expenses a deduction in order to qualify for tax help so they could afford to live in their homes as they age. It didn't pass this year but I will continue working on this issue.

Equal Pay Opportunity Act

Women 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**, which passed the House, but was rejected by the Senate, would have banned employers from retaliating against their employees for discussing wages and salaries, allowing transparency in hiring and salary practices for everyone.

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Pregnant workers

Expecting mothers in every corner of the state still face discrimination at work. In the House we passed **HB 2307** to require employers to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace for pregnancy-related conditions, unless the accommodation imposes an undue hardship on the employer's business. Unfortunately, the Senate did not support the bill.

12-Month supply of contraceptives

Access to affordable birth control is no longer just an option—it's a requirement. But making women fill their birth control prescription monthly is an unnecessary burden. **HB 2465** would have required insurance plans to reimburse for a 12-month supply of contraceptive

drugs, instead of forcing twelve separate trips to the pharmacy. The bill passed the House almost unanimously, but was not brought up for a vote on the Senate floor.

Addressing domestic violence recidivism

Another bill that passed the House with an almost unanimous vote, but was not supported by the Senate, was **HB 1632**. One in four women will be a victim of domestic violence in her lifetime and repeat domestic violence offenders wreak untold damage on their victims, children, and their communities. This measure would have cracked down on those offenders with better accountability and supervision, and would have also increased the punishment for their crimes.