



Legislative Report TO THE 49TH DISTRICT



State Representative Sharon Wylie

Spring 2018

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- Transportation
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Dear friends and neighbors,

The 2018 legislative session was very productive and finished on time. With Democrats leading the Senate, we were able to pass numerous wins both policy and budget-wise that put people first.

In this newsletter, you'll find highlights of some of the measures that will make a difference in communities in our district and throughout the state, as well as a summary of the budgets and our K-12 investments to comply with the *McCleary* mandate.

We are all concerned about the crisis in housing and homelessness throughout our state. This was a year where many tools and approaches to help people have a safe place to call home passed and were signed into law.

Since there isn't enough room to talk about every issue, if there's something specific you're interested in, or you want more information on any of the bills discussed here, please contact my office at your earliest convenience.

Always honored to serve you,

EQUAL PAY OPPORTUNITY ACT

Women make up almost half of the workforce yet, in Washington, over the course of 40 years of work, the average woman will earn almost half a million less than her male counterpart. After receiving Democratic support over the last few years, the **Equal Pay Opportunity Act, HB 1506**, finally made it to the governor's desk. This new law updates, for the first time since 1943, the Washington State Equal Pay Act by:

- Prohibiting pay secrecy policies
- Allowing discussion of wages
- Preventing discrimination by gender in providing opportunities
- Banning retaliation against workers who file complaints, discuss wages or seek advancement opportunities
- Ensuring workers are entitled to remedies in the event of violations



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OPERATING BUDGET

The 2018 supplemental operating budget updates the two-year budget approved last year. We made critical investments in education, mental health and tax relief:

K12 Education/McCleary

Our most significant investment in 2018 was **\$1 billion additional dollars for public schools** to fully fund teacher salaries by the 2018-19 school year as ordered by the Supreme Court. I believe these funds will finally resolve the McCleary litigation. Our education bill ([ESSB 6362](#)) also includes:

- \$100 million for special education.
- \$51 million to recruit and retain talented educators.
- \$8 million for Science Standards Pro Learning.
- 4 percent increase in state salary for highly qualified teachers beginning in 2019-20.
- Creating greater stability high poverty districts by using a three-year average to determine eligibility for extra funding.
- Providing more transparency about how public education dollars are spent.

Mental Health

This session's investment of nearly **\$300 million for mental and behavioral health care** supports the state's obligations at our state hospitals and in our communities. This funding will help address two of the primary drivers of our current homelessness crisis: untreated substance abuse and mental health issues. The money will support patients in our state hospitals and provide more community support for those who are facing a crisis and need help.

Property Tax Reduction

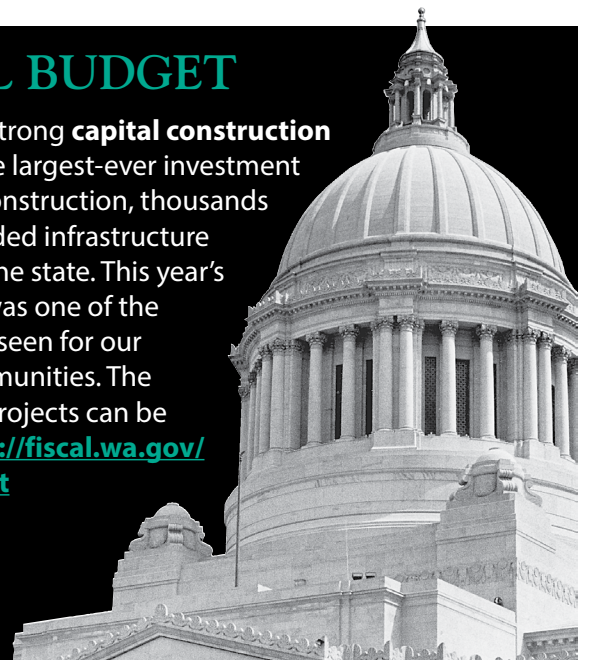
Due to last session's GOP property tax hike, many families across the state are hurting. We proposed short-and long-term property tax cuts but only a one-time **\$391 million property tax cut** for 2019 passed into law. Next year, property owners will see a reduction in both their state property tax and their local school levy property taxes.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Our state's transportation network ties together every corner of the state to get people to work and school, and get goods to market. The supplemental **transportation budget** continued the commitments made in the \$9.3 billion (state, federal and local funds) budget we approved last year. To see the projects, go to <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetTProjList>

CAPITAL BUDGET

We approved a strong **capital construction budget**, with the largest-ever investment in K-12 school construction, thousands of jobs, and needed infrastructure projects across the state. This year's capital budget was one of the strongest I have seen for our region and communities. The capital budget projects can be accessed at <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetCProjList>



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ADDRESSING STUDENT LOANS

Nearly 800,000 Washingtonians are currently paying off their college education; each of them, on average, has a student loan of around \$24,000. We passed three measures to help both, borrowers who are struggling to keep up with their payments, and current students who may not fully understand the extent of their loans until it's time to start paying them back.

Student Opportunity, Assistance, and Relief Act

When people default on their loan payments, the state can revoke their professional licenses, or garnish 25 percent of their paychecks. These actions make it even more difficult – if not impossible – to pay back the loan. **HB 1169** repeals provisions allowing professional license suspension due to student loan default, lowers the interest for unpaid private student loan debt, and increases bank account and wage garnishment exemptions.

Student Loan Transparency Act

SB 5022 protects student borrowers who may struggle with confusing information and often end up taken advantage of by scammers. The new law requires institutions of higher education to provide notices detailing student's loan balances and estimated monthly payments each time a financial aid package that includes a new or revised student loan is offered.

Student Loan Bill of Rights

SB 6029 establishes a range of provisions designed to protect Washingtonians from deceptive or predatory practices and requires student loan servicers to be licensed to operate in the state. It also establishes a Student Education Loan Advocate to aid borrowers, compile data, provide information on student loans, and receive, review, and take action on complaints from borrowers.



PREVENTATIVE HEALTH

Because of the federal Affordable Care Act, preventive care has increased for all age groups. Access to routine health care services like immunizations and health screenings saves lives and improves health throughout life. Due to Federal uncertainty, we protected Washingtonian's access to care. We passed **HB 1523** this year to ensure that health plans will **continue to provide the same coverage of preventive services** no matter what happens at the federal level. Ensuring that every family can access basic health care, regardless of their income, keeps people healthy and avoids many of the expenses of preventable diseases.



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TACKLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The opioid crisis is an epidemic that impacts all of our communities, contributing to rising homelessness and putting pressure on our social safety net. This year we passed [HB 1047](#), a **statewide Drug Take-Back Program** to encourage the return of unused prescription drugs – keeping these drugs away from people who might misuse them. Additionally, our budget increased funding for treatment and prevention related to substance abuse disorders



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ACCESS TO DEMOCRACY PACKAGE

We passed, and the governor signed, five bills to improve ballot access, increase campaign finance transparency, boost turnout, give local communities the opportunity to elect more reflective and responsive leadership, and ensure the security and integrity of our elections.

[SB 6002](#) - Washington Voting Rights Act: Gives historically underrepresented communities tools to help elect more reflective and responsive representation.

[HB 1513](#) - Youth Voter Pre-Registration: Allows 16 and 17 year olds to pre-register when they get their driver permit or license so they can vote when they turn 18.

[HB 2595](#) - Automatic Voter Registration: Registers eligible voters automatically through interactions with government agencies, like getting an enhanced driver's license. When Oregon enacted automatic voter registration, they added nearly 300,000 new voters in just one year.

[SB 6021](#) - Same Day Registration: Allows citizens to register to vote on the day of the election. States with same-day voter registration have higher participation rates.

[SB 5991](#) - The Disclose Act: Shines a light on unaccountable campaign dollars, bringing transparency to the political spending of non-profit organizations in elections.
