

REPRESENTATIVE NOEL FRAME

I am serving as Co-Chair of the Work Group, and we are currently in the stage in which the Department of Revenue is conducting a robust analysis of our tax code and modeling alternative structures. The next steps will be to engage the public in discussions on the tax structure, provide feedback to the Legislature, and formulate policy proposals. Although this work will be ongoing for the next few years, we are on the path to modernizing and balancing the Washington state tax structure so that it is equitable, adequate, stable, and transparent!

Learn more about the Tax Structure Work Group, sign up to receive email updates, and find information on past and upcoming meetings on the Department of Revenue dedicated website: dor.wa.gov/about/tax-structure-work-group.

COVID-19 Information and Resources

The COVID-19 situation is changing quickly. Stay up to date with the most accurate and current information available on these COVID-19 resource pages:

WA State COVID-19 website:
coronavirus.wa.gov

WA state House Democrats:
housedemocrats.wa.gov/covid-19

Gov. Jay Inslee's office:
governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources

WA State Dept. of Health:
doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus

TVW – Washington's public affairs channel:
tvw.org/covid-19

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
NOEL FRAME
36TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

REPORT ON THE
2019-20 BIENNIUM

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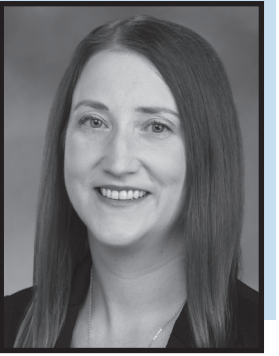
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(Vice Chair) • Finance • Housing, Community
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Neighbors,

We are living in unprecedented times, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is creating significant concern and anxiety among families, workers, and employers. As the 2019-20 legislative biennium was ending, the pandemic was just hitting our state. On the last day of the 2020 session in mid-March, we passed bipartisan legislation to allocate over \$200 million in COVID-19 emergency response funds to increase capacity in hospitals, make it easier to hire health care workers, expand testing, and provide vital resources to help small businesses, workers, and families.

I'm proud of the work we did to help ensure our state can meet the needs of our communities as this virus continues to spread. I also want to share with you some of the significant public policies the Legislature passed this biennium that will continue to benefit our state after we make it through this unexpected crisis.

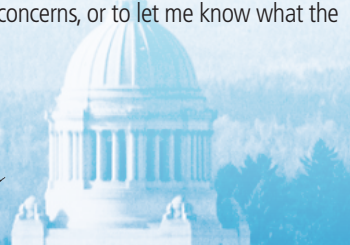
Over the last two sessions, the Legislature passed tenant protections and eviction reforms, created a statewide Office of Equity, banned "gay and trans panic" defenses, and established the Long-Term Care Trust, which will help families pay for the high cost of providing care for aging loved ones. We also passed legislation to transition our state to 100% clean energy by 2045, raise the legal age to buy tobacco to 21, ban single-use plastic bags, and create Cascade Care, which offers working families affordable health care on the individual market. The Legislature also approved the Workforce Education Investment Act, which provides full and partial tuition assistance for low- and middle-income students. We also passed balanced operating, transportation, and capital budgets, all while ending on time each year.

Inside this newsletter you'll find information on the work I've done and the policies I've successfully passed over the past two years. You'll also find some brief information and resources on COVID-19. Please don't hesitate to reach out to my office if you have questions or concerns, or to let me know what the Legislature should prioritize in 2021.

Stay safe and please wash your hands!

Sincerely,

Noel Frame
Rep. Noel Frame



Rethinking Juvenile Justice

There are significant problems with the way our justice system handles young people. Instead of pushing juveniles into the revolving door of the criminal justice system, we should hold young people accountable for their actions while still setting them up for success. It is with that goal in mind that I've been working on a range of juvenile justice reforms during my tenure in the Legislature, including multiple pieces of legislation that were successful this biennium.

House Bill 1742, also known as the Responsible Teen Communications Act, ensures that minors who share sexually explicit images or videos of themselves or their peers (commonly known as "sexting") are not automatically charged with a felony sex offense. Instead, the new law holds these young people accountable with age appropriate interventions.

Senate Bill 5290, the companion to a bill I sponsored, was passed successfully and phases out sending young people to juvenile detention for things like running away from home or skipping school. Sending these kids to juvenile detention didn't serve as an appropriate deterrent, and instead could lead to additional trauma.

Finally, during the 2020 session, I successfully sponsored legislation to streamline the process of juvenile record sealing. House Bill 2794, which was signed into law in March, allows juvenile records to be automatically sealed if the young person has served their time, completed community supervision, paid restitution owed to their victims, has no pending charges and has lived in the community crime-free for a number of years.

Youth Behavioral Health

The demand for behavioral health services has far outpaced the capacity in Washington state. For years, the Legislature has been working to find solutions to this behavioral health crisis, and I'm glad to report that my work this biennium has contributed to expanding access to care, specifically for our state's youth.

I serve as co-chair of the Children's Mental Health Work Group and have sponsored multiple bills grounded in the results of that work. The 2019 session saw the passage of two such pieces of legislation. House Bill 1874, a constituent request bill, allows parents and guardians to be

more involved in the behavioral health treatment of their child. Before this new law was enacted, a minor starting at age 13 could exclude their parents or guardians from their behavioral health treatment. The new law allows behavioral health professionals to provide parents and guardians with certain treatment information if they determine the release of that information is appropriate and not harmful and permits parents and guardians to admit their child for inpatient or outpatient treatment without their consent if deemed medically necessary.

Senate Bill 5903, the companion to a bill I sponsored, is also now law and contains multiple recommendations from the work group. Those include requiring the development of statewide plans to implement a multi-tiered system of school supports; requiring school staff to receive training in mental health first aid and suicide prevention; expanding child psychiatry residencies; and requiring the state to deliver infant and early childhood mental health consultation.

I'm proud to share that during the 2020 session, I helped steward the priorities of this work group through the legislative process and am pleased to share that all four policy bills, and every single budget item, requested by the work group were successfully passed into law and included in the state budget as passed by the legislature.

Supporting Washington's Workers

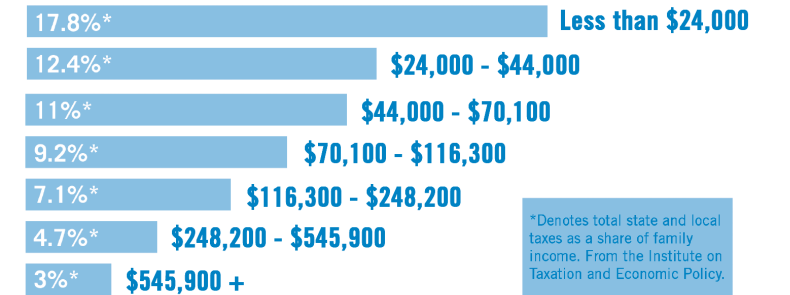
In addition to working on legislation to improve the lives of our state's youth, I also successfully passed bills that support workers in Washington. House Bill 1706, a constituent request bill that I sponsored, addresses the archaic practice of paying people with disabilities less than minimum wage. No class of employees should be marginalized, and minimum wage protections should be for everyone, regardless of their disability status. The new law bans the state of Washington, as an employer, from paying subminimum wages to workers with disabilities, creating a first step toward ending the unfair practice.

Senate Bill 5258, the companion to another of my bills, provides protections for isolated workers. The new law requires hotels, motels, retail, security guard entities, and other businesses who employ people who are isolated during their work day to adopt a sexual harassment policy, provide mandatory training regarding sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination, and provide a panic button to those isolated workers.

Working to Balance Washington's Tax Code

While I've worked on many other issues this biennium, many of you know that what brought me to the Legislature was our state's upside-down tax code. Washington's tax code is THE MOST regressive in the nation. Our current tax structure relies primarily on sales tax, property tax, and other excise taxes. Those taxes affect households at the lowest end of the income spectrum, which pay **six times more** of their income to taxes compared to the wealthiest households in the state.

WHO IS ACTUALLY PAYING?



It's not just low- and middle-income households that suffer. The Business & Occupation tax is a gross receipts tax, which penalizes small, start-up and low-margin businesses because it doesn't allow deductions for the costs of doing business. In addition, large businesses and industries have secured many of the more than 748 tax preferences in our code that give breaks to a small number of taxpayers and result in more than \$68 billion in foregone state revenue each biennium. These exemptions shift the burden of funding community needs to the remaining taxpayers and creates real winners and losers within the code.

In 2018, the Tax Structure Work Group began facilitating public discussions to garner feedback about Washington's tax structure and how it affects small business owners, workers, and families. This biennium I was successful in getting the bipartisan, bicameral Tax Structure Work Group reauthorized and expanded, allowing that work to continue. Our aim is to conduct a holistic review of the tax code and develop alternatives, with small, start-up, and low-margin businesses, as well as low- and middle-income taxpayers at the table guiding that work.