

# SENATOR JIM HONEYFORD



## 15th District Olympia Report

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Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development - Ranking; Ways & Means - Capital Budget; Energy, Environment & Telecommunications

## Budget negotiations continue as Senate mourns lost colleague

The special session has kicked into a higher gear as we approach June 11th, the 30th and final day of the special session under Washington's constitution. Earlier this week the governor voiced how he likely would call a second special session to begin immediately if Tuesday comes and goes without a budget agreement. Perhaps that spurred majority leadership in the House of Representatives to finally get serious about budget negotiations, because on Wednesday **they offered a new spending proposal.**

The good news is that the House proposal scaled back its original tax plan, as well as the overall level of spending from the budget proposal it approved April 12. The bad news is that **the vast majority of those spending reductions are tied to education**, meaning that the House's new approach would harm our state's students and schools.

I remains focused on working collaboratively to find agreement on not only an operating and capital budget, but also the associated reform bills. My hope is that we will soon vote on a final budget that holds the line on taxes, gives K-12 and higher education the boost they deserve and ensures state government will be more accountable, transparent and efficient. **As negotiations continue, I expect things to develop quickly.**

Additionally, the Senate welcomed a new face to its chamber this week. Rep. Steve O'Ban was appointed unanimously Tuesday by the Pierce County Council to fill the Senate seat left vacant by the May 29 death of **Sen. Mike Carrell**. Mike was my friend and colleague, a true statesman and





the kind of lawmaker we need more of in Olympia.

During his 19-year service, Mike was instrumental in passing such legislation as the “Becca” bill to help at-risk youth, prison and supervision reform, “fair-share” offender release, mental health system reform and worker protection, welfare reform, ethics in public service laws, veteran and military benefit improvements, and many others.

I appreciated Mike's ability to see history that needed preservation where others saw only dilapidation. That led to his efforts to restore the grounds of Western State Hospital, identify the occupants of thousands of unmarked graves in its nearby cemetery, protect Fort Steilacoom’s historic parade grounds, and restore DuPont’s historic narrow-gauge dynamite train.

**Like me, Mike was a car enthusiast** and animal lover, spending much of his free time restoring his three Triumph automobiles and training his German Shepherds. The Senate won't be the same without him, and my thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

## **New House budget proposal presents victories, challenges**

Earlier this week, the House released a new \$33.7 billion spending proposal...a sign that they are finally taking budget negotiations seriously. The proposal released this week represents an improvement over the original House budget but while the lower level of spending is welcome, it's unconscionable that more than 75 percent of the reductions would come from education.

**Education should get our first dollars, not our last dime.**

In all, the House budget rewrite would put \$217 million less towards education than the bipartisan plan the Senate approved during the regular session. Much of the education spending in the new House proposal is based on higher taxes, fund shifts from other accounts or pushing appropriations into the next budget cycle.

It's encouraging that the House majority has retreated from its original attempt to raise taxes on families and employers by some \$1.3 billion; **however, the new tax increases it wants are sure to raise eyebrows.**



It remains to be seen whether there is sufficient support in the House for these taxes. **Going forward, the Legislature has two options:** continue to move towards the Senate approach of living within the state’s means and prioritizing education, or follow the House’s path of higher taxes and “bucks for bureaucrats” that expands general government.

## No support for higher gas taxes

On April 19 the Senate Transportation Committee approved a bare-bones, no-new-taxes transportation budget for 2013-15. Three days later the House Transportation Committee adopted a separate bill that would impose a **10-cent hike in the state portion of the gas tax over three years**, and create or increase an array of other transportation-related fees.

The no-new-taxes nature of the transportation budget didn't change as it sailed through the Senate (with a 46-1 vote) and the House (vote: 72-25) and on to the governor, who signed it May 20. Although the governor is still cheerleading for more transportation revenue, at least publicly, the reality is this: The Legislature can adjourn for the year without another word about transportation because we already have a new transportation budget in place.



No one would deny that our state's transportation infrastructure would benefit from having more support than the new bare-bones transportation budget can give it. At the same time, those of us who appreciate the idea of "reforms before revenue" might feel differently about an increase in transportation funding if there was ample proof that **our state transportation department is squeezing the most out of every gas-tax dollar it's already receiving**. If this year's push for a gas-tax hike sputters to a halt, which is how it appears to be headed, the governor and his transportation secretary would be wise to advocate serious reforms to the way roads are built and maintained before anyone comes back with hat in hand.

## In closing...

A big priority for me is getting your feedback as often as possible. It is one of the best tools I have to help me better represent you. As always, if you would like to contact me you can write, phone, e-mail, or stop by. **It remains my honor to serve you in the Washington State Senate.**

Sincerely,



Jim Honeyford  
State Senator, 15th District



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