

# 8<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT 2014 SESSION REVIEW

Serving Benton County, West Richland, Richland and Kennewick



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- Education
- Judiciary
- Transportation



May 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

For the first time since 2009, the state Legislature adjourned on time (March 13) with no plans for a special session. This is a win for taxpayers around the state as special sessions cost money that is better suited for K-12 education, higher education and public safety.

This year, those of us who wanted to hold the line on taxes prevailed once again. We also kept the state budget in balance, approved another small increase in support for K-12 education and held in-state tuition rates at the state-run colleges and universities steady for another year.

This newsletter will serve to inform you about just some of the issues we dealt with in Olympia on your behalf. If you have questions or other concerns to share with us, please call, send an e-mail or write a letter using the contact information and our legislative website addresses on this page. We are always glad to hear from you, and welcome your comments and ideas.

Sincerely,

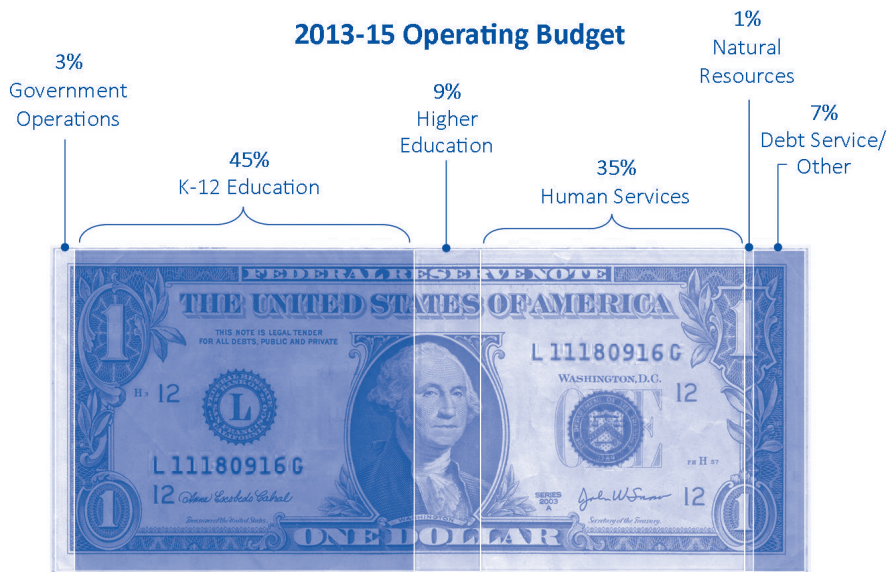
Sen. Sharon Brown

Rep. Larry Haler

Rep. Brad Klippert

# 2014 SESSION REVIEW

## LEGISLATURE PASSES A TRUE SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET



The final bipartisan budget agreement that passed the Legislature was the first truly supplemental budget we've seen in years. The supplemental budget is NOT a time to rewrite the entire budget. It is specifically for addressing unforeseen circumstances in caseloads or revenue collections so that our budget remains balanced throughout the two-year biennium. In the past, lawmakers were either writing full-scale budgets during supplemental years to add programs and increase spending (during Gov. Gregoire's first years in office) because tax collections were high, or having to scale back the budget due to the recession when tax collections were low. This year, budget writers in both the House and Senate finally avoided both.

The 2014 supplemental budget increased spending by less than 0.23 percent, mostly for maintenance issues. It included a little more for education and the *McCleary* decision (\$58 million) and for Opportunity Scholarships (\$25 million). It keeps our promise to college students by freezing tuition rates for the entire 2015 school year and keeps \$315 million in reserves to protect against any downturn in our economy.

One of the most important aspects about the budget is that it is balanced out for four years! This is a new requirement based on a law that passed in 2012, something we've been advocating for years. In order to help avoid the "budget roller coaster" of the past, our state budget must now be projected to balance out in the next biennium as well as the current two-year budget cycle. This four-year budget requirement is a huge protection for taxpayers and helps prevent overspending.

## HOLDING THE LINE ON TAXES

Olympia's appetite for taxes often seems to be insatiable. Legislation from Democrats in both the House and Senate would have raised taxes on e-cigs (vaping), bottled water, prescription drugs, out-of-state residents and fuel refineries. But we worked with our colleagues to hold the line against new and increased taxes. We recognize you've had to do more with less and believe state government should do the same. Living within our means is something the public expects and we continually strive to make that happen.

There was also a big push to raise the gas tax this year by up to 11.5 cents per gallon. However, without serious reforms, we cannot support throwing more good money away on a transportation construction system and a Washington State Department of Transportation that lacks accountability, transparency and a proven track record of on-time and on-budget success. The "Bertha" tunneling machine in Seattle; the cracked and damaged pontoons for the SR 520 bridge; a freeway off ramp built in the wrong place (State Route 16 in Tacoma) – these are all expensive examples of time and money wasted with very little accountability. We can and must do better if we are to win back the trust of the citizens who pay the bill.

We supported reforms to make transportation projects less costly, such as: keeping sales-tax revenues collected from transportation projects in the transportation budget; reducing unnecessary regulations that drive up costs; and keeping government-contracted wages under control through prevailing-wage reform.



## EDUCATION

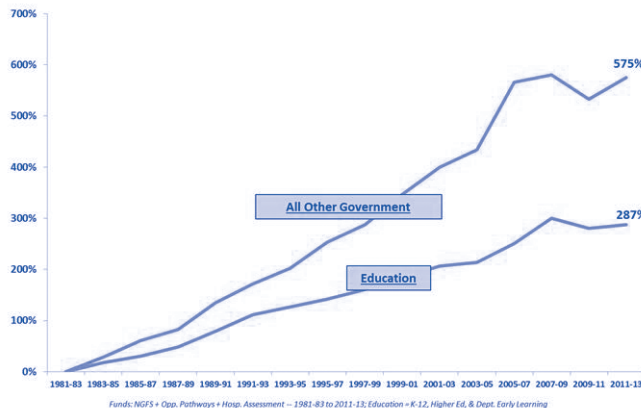
### Making basic education our top priority

In contrast to the past 30 years, the focus in Olympia is now on prioritizing education in the state budget. We did so last year, and this year's supplemental budget continues that progress.

In the 2014 supplemental budget, we prioritized education with two-thirds of increased spending going toward early learning, K-12 or higher education.

Like you, we know that money alone will not solve all of our state's education problems. Washington increased education spending by 29 percent in the eight years prior to the formation of the Majority Coalition Caucus in the Senate, yet our graduation rate remained flat at 76 percent and the achievement gap actually widened. That's why we will continue to fight for educational reforms to increase student achievement in reading and math, improve disciplinary processes and give principals more authority to choose who teaches in their schools.

Non-education spending dominated budget growth over the past 30 years



### Republicans work to keep the freeze on tuition rates

As you may recall, last year Democrats in the House of Representatives pushed for a five percent annual tuition increase in their budget proposal, but Republicans in the House and Senate said no – enough is enough. As a result of our efforts, the 2013 budget included a one-year “hard freeze” on tuition. In the second year, however, state-run colleges and universities had the authority to raise tuition.

To address this, the Senate budget proposal this year put a hard freeze on tuition for a second year. Once again, House Democrats fought this move. They maintained the ability for institutions to raise tuition in their budget proposal. In the end, we held to our position and the “hard freeze” policy won out in negotiations. That means there will be no tuition increase in the upcoming 2014-15 school year!

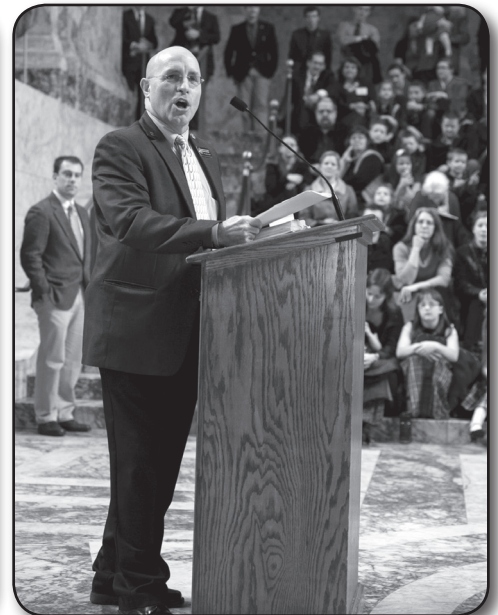
Along with no tuition increases, we also put nearly \$25 million into the Opportunity Scholarships and another \$12 million into College Bound scholarships.



**SEN. BROWN**



**REP. HALER**



**REP. KLIPPERT**

# 8<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

## JOBS/ECONOMY

Last November legislators were rushed back to Olympia for a whirlwind special session to vote on tax-incentive legislation to keep Boeing jobs in the Puget Sound region and provide millions of dollars in infrastructure. Unfortunately, we were unable to pass any tax-incentive proposals for other regions in the state that would have created good, family-wage jobs.

### **Missed Opportunity: House Dems block Brown's "Reinvest in Washington Jobs Act"**



One of the biggest disappointments of the 2014 session was the House of Representatives' failure to vote on Sen. Brown's bill to bring family-wage manufacturing and construction jobs back to our state.

The Reinvest in Washington Jobs Act (Senate Bill 6515) would have created a pilot program to provide a business-tax credit for a portion of the construction costs of up to five new manufacturing facilities, two of which had to be located in eastern Washington.

This pilot program to create new manufacturing jobs had nearly universal support from across the political spectrum, as well as from organized labor and employers; yet, Democrat leaders in the House kept the measure from receiving a final up-or-down vote.

It is baffling why they would refuse to move on this bipartisan bill and leave those manufacturing jobs on the table, but we will continue to work for smart ideas that get Washingtonians back to work.

### **The War on Jobs**



In addition to several good ideas which were not adopted, there were a number of proposals introduced that would have weakened our state's economy and hurt job retention and creation, particularly for our smaller employers. There were proposals to:

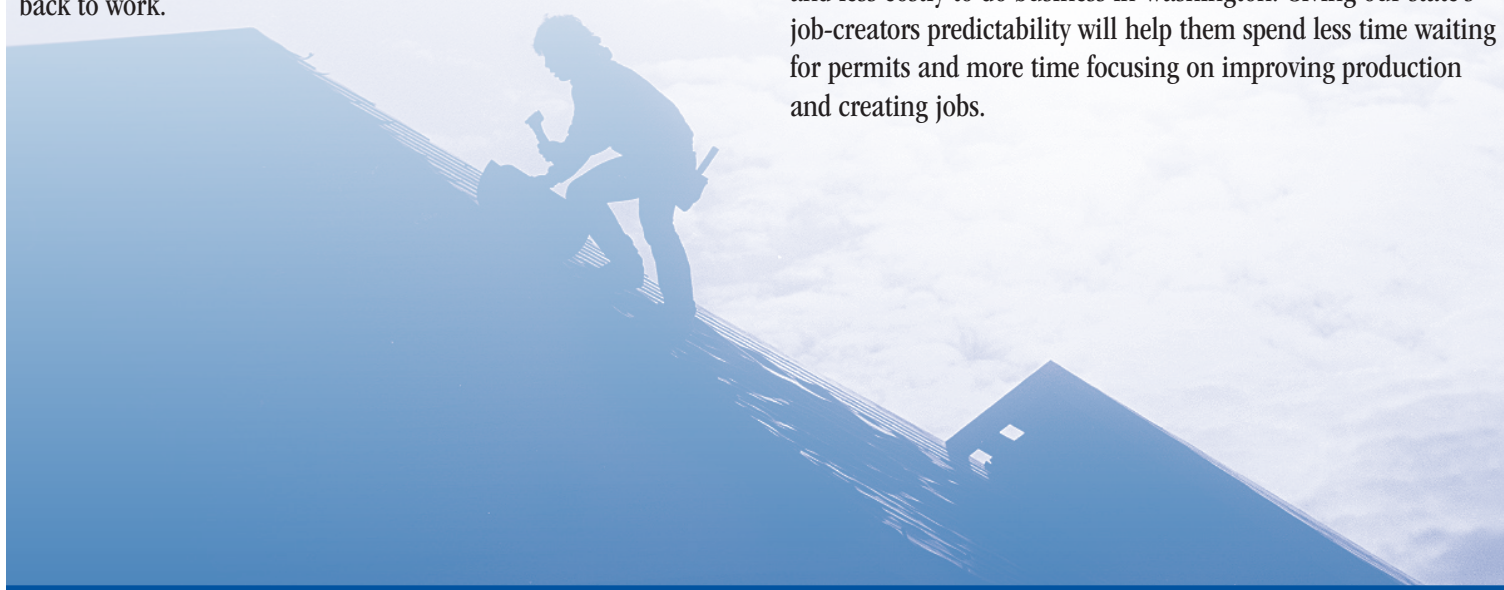
- increase the minimum wage;
- require mandatory sick and safe leave;
- require mandatory vacation leave; and
- add or expand provisions related to Obamacare.

In a sluggish economy these kinds of bills simply add to the instability and uncertainty of our business climate. Fortunately, we were able to defeat these measures this session.

### **New law to streamline permitting and make it easier to do business in Washington**

One of the bright spots regarding jobs this session was the passage of the Transparency in Permitting, or TIP, Act (House Bill 2192/Senate Bill 6045). The measure, sponsored by Rep. Halpern in the House and Sen. Brown in the Senate, requires state agencies to begin tracking how long it takes to process business-permit applications and provide more information online. In doing so, the measure will create transparency and certainty for businesses and accountability for agencies.

We must continue efforts to make it easier, more predictable and less costly to do business in Washington. Giving our state's job-creators predictability will help them spend less time waiting for permits and more time focusing on improving production and creating jobs.





## PUBLIC SAFETY

We believe that keeping our communities safe is a top priority of government. Regardless of where you live, you should feel safe in your home and community.

### Klippert bills to get tough on DUI offenders



Some small steps were made to improving DUI laws, such as adding five new offenses to the list of those that count as prior offenses when a person is charged with a DUI or physical control of a vehicle while under the influence. Legislation also passed requiring consecutive sentences, in certain circumstances, for DUI or physical control of a vehicle under the influence of intoxicating liquor, marijuana, or any drug.

We still need to be tougher on DUI offenders. We are very supportive of Rep. Klippert's bills that would have:

- required all DUI offenders to be arrested, booked and put on a six-hour hold;
- made a person's fourth DUI conviction a felony, meaning prison rather than jail, instead of on the fifth DUI conviction, as current law allows; and
- eliminated the "10-year look-back" for felony DUIs, so the fourth DUI in a lifetime would be a felony DUI, instead of the fifth DUI within 10 years.

Unfortunately, none of these bills moved forward this year.

### Gov. Inslee ignores victims' families with unilateral death-penalty moratorium

All nine men on Washington's death row committed heinous murders, and their victims include women or small children.

So when Gov. Inslee placed a moratorium on the death penalty by executive order, it caught law enforcement, prosecutors, lawmakers and victims' advocates by surprise.

We did not agree with his decision, but more importantly, we still feel it was insensitive to announce such a decision without even consulting with most of the victims' families.

Capital punishment is the law in our state. If the governor wants to change the law, he should work through the legislative process – allowing public involvement.

## ENERGY



### Haler's bill to allow for "renewable" hydroelectric power in irrigation ditches signed into law

Hydro power created in certain drainage pipes, irrigation canals and other water pipes will now be considered as "green" energy under provisions of House Bill 2733, sponsored by Rep. Haler. The bill recognizes

that water has multiple uses and any opportunity to capture water moving around the property of farmers, ranchers, orchardists and other land owners should be utilized. Haler's bill will allow small hydroelectric projects in irrigations canals to count as renewable energy under the Energy Independence Act, created by voters via Initiative 937 in 2006.

### Brown's "Incremental Hydro" bill stalls in the House

The House failed to act on a measure introduced by Sen. Brown that would have allowed some incremental electricity produced by efficiency improvements to hydro projects to qualify as an eligible renewable resource. Millions of Washingtonians have already paid for these efficiency improvements to hydro projects, and they should be able to see the benefits of those improvements. Our families need electricity, and they need jobs so they can afford it. Senate Bill 6058 would have helped provide both by allowing our utilities to pass any cost savings on to their customers. The measure passed the Senate 28-20, but was never brought up for a vote in the House.

### Brown secures grant to study possible Hanford small nuclear reactor site

A \$500,000 state Department of Commerce grant awarded to the Tri-City Development Council last year is set to fund a site analysis of Hanford as a possible location for a new federal Small Modular Reactor (SMR).

Carl Adrian, the President of TRIDEC, thanked Sen. Brown for securing funding for this study and for sponsoring a bill to create a legislative task force on the topic. The study will give stakeholders and lawmakers a clearer picture of the potential of nuclear power to support the local Tri-Cities economy and create jobs, in addition to providing clean energy for our state.

State Senator  
**SHARON BROWN**  
State Representatives  
**LARRY HALER & BRAD KLIPPERT**

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# 2014 Session Review

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## 8<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



### FLEXIBLE SCHOOL SCHEDULES PASSED LEGISLATURE

Legislation originally prime-sponsored by Rep. Klippert in 2013 that would provide school districts an opportunity to be more flexible in their schedules passed the Legislature this year in the form of **Senate Bill 6242**. Paterson and Bickleton School Districts have tried this with great success. It has been a cost-saving measure and improved efficiencies in the districts while maintaining academic standards. The legislation gives the State Board of Education the authority to grant waivers through August, 31, 2017.

