

# Olympia Update

*From Senator Curtis King, 14th District*



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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's been a little over a month since the Legislature adjourned for the 2014 session. Between co-chairing the Senate Transportation committee, meeting with folks from home and working on legislation, this short session flew by. We finished on time and passed a bipartisan supplemental budget that didn't increase your taxes.

**Please read on for more details regarding the 2014 legislative session.**

## On time and on budget

Since my first days in Olympia, costly and frustrating special sessions have been the norm. That's why I was so pleased this year when we finished this "short" legislative session in the 60 days allowed by the state's constitution.

We also passed a bipartisan supplemental budget that focused on the basics and maintained the balance in the operating budget adopted in 2013. The Legislature is required to pass a new state operating budget in odd-numbered years. While supplemental budgets may be passed in even-numbered years, they are not mandatory. Their intended purpose is to deal with emergency issues and make modest adjustments to the operating budget from the previous year.

When my colleagues and I formed the [Majority Coalition Caucus](#) last year, we vowed to put aside political differences and work in a bipartisan fashion to find solutions based on shared principles. What we have managed to achieve in two years speaks to that commitment.

## College-tuition freeze and greater access to higher education

For the second year in a row, college students and their parents received welcome news: The Legislature halted tuition increases at state colleges. Although the cost of higher education is high, this freeze in tuition gives students and parents some breathing room as they plan for college.

We also made higher education less costly and more attainable for those who have served our country. Previously there was a one-year waiting period to pay in-state tuition rates for veterans attending Washington colleges. Not only did we remove that barrier, but we also made it possible for military training to count as academic credit. That way, degrees may be earned faster.

## Taking care of the most vulnerable

My colleagues and I want to make sure our developmentally disabled citizens are protected and have meaningful work. That's why we passed the Vulnerable Individuals Priority Act to do just that. This act eliminates the state waitlist, making services for developmentally disabled citizens more accessible. More than 5,000 individuals will benefit with supported employment and caregiver respite.

## No agreement reached on transportation package

After months of negotiating between the Senate, the House and the governor's office, we were unable to reach an agreement on a transportation revenue package before the end of session. Going in I wanted to believe that everyone in the room was as committed to fixing our broken transportation system as I was. It was disheartening to learn that wasn't the case.

Last fall I spent weeks on the road listening to voters from all corners of the state voice their opinion on transportation issues. The message I heard loud and clear was no more costly mismanaged projects. Failing to address the problems within the Department of Transportation and rewarding them with more money would be a failure of the Legislature. I'm committed to not allowing that to happen. I'm keenly aware there are serious transportation needs that must be addressed, but reforming how taxpayer dollars are spent is critical.

Work continues on a transportation revenue package that will help us address the many problems in our transportation system. The Legislature needs to be able to assure you (the public) that if we ask for more money, it will be used as wisely and effectively as possible.

## Tanning bed bill signed into law

Two years ago I remember being asked to sponsor legislation that would prohibit children from using tanning beds. As I considered the effects of UV exposure on young people and the families who had lost loved ones due to melanoma, I decided...why wouldn't I?

Although the decision to introduce a bill requiring users of tanning beds to be at least 18 was an

easy one for me, reaching an agreement between the tanning industry and the medical community was more difficult. After listening to the testimony of dermatologists, family members and those living with melanoma, however, I became even more determined to see this bill become law.

Fortunately we were able to hammer out an agreement before the end of session. When family members of those who had died from melanoma as a result of tanning-bed use joined me in Olympia for [Senate Bill 6065](#) to be signed into law, the initial decision to sponsor this measure became even more meaningful.



*Attending the bill signing in the Governor's office. He is flanked by family members who lost loved ones at a young age to skin cancer due to tanning-bed use.*

Frequent exposure to UV rays increases the risk of developing melanoma – the most aggressive and deadliest form of skin cancer – by 75 percent for people younger than 35 years of age, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Meeting with friends

With the legislative session ending I'm finally able to visit with my neighbors again. Recently, I spent a day touring local classrooms. I'm always impressed with the time and energy teachers put into their students.

Here I am meeting with some important constituents at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.





## In closing...

Thank you for reading my Olympia Update and I encourage you to [contact me](#) with your thoughts, opinions and concerns about state or district issues. I highly value your opinion and - as always - it remains my honor to serve you in the Washington State Senate.

Sincerely,

Curtis King  
State Senator, 14th District



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