



2016 Legislative Update

Education

✓ *Funding*

Washington has made considerable progress toward fully funding our public schools having invested **\$4.2 billion new dollars** into K-12 since 2011. But there's still work to do. Fully funding schools, closing the opportunity gap, ensuring kids are nourished, and reducing the number of homeless students living on the streets will ensure we're **providing opportunities to learn for all kids**. *HB 1541*

✓ *Teacher shortage and Truancy*

I voted to **address the teacher shortage** with a new streamlined certification for out-of-state educators, financial incentives to become teachers, expanding retired teachers to be substitutes. And as truancy is a massive problem, where we are second in the country in the highest amount of absences, we're working to **reduce truancy by establishing community truancy boards** to address barriers to school attendance and **assess student needs**. *SB 6455, HB 2449*

Higher Education

✓ *Tuition cut in 2015*

Last year I was very proud to cast my vote for a budget that cut tuition fees for ALL students across Washington. But just cutting fees isn't enough: we had to make sure that those cuts didn't include cutting needed programs or staff from our local community colleges and universities.

✓ *Keeping Colleges Whole in 2016*

This year I voted for \$7.9 million in a "tuition backfill" that made sure our higher education institutions were kept whole, while giving students a break on the bill. And we put \$18 million back in our State Need Grant fund, which helps send those without means to college in our state without incurring tens of thousands of debt. *2ESHB 2376*

Homelessness

✓ *Student Homelessness Crisis*

Every city and county across the state is dealing with a homelessness crisis. In Washington, we have over 35,000 homeless students. The state budget we passed this year, and a supporting bill I voted for, are

✓ *Hospital Oversight Committee & Accountability*

I voted for **new legislative oversight** over the way things are run at our state hospitals, specifically Western State, so we can finally start fixing some of the problems. It creates a joint select committee of representatives from the executive and legislative branches to **oversee the state's mental health hospitals**. It would also provide for three outside consultants to look at the hospitals' staffing issues, whether staff are using the best mental health treatment practices, and how patients enter and leave treatment. *HB 2453, SB 6656*

Capital/Construction Budget

Every year, workers across Washington state put on hard hats and pick up their tools to build public schools, colleges, parks and other facilities. This work is funded by the state's capital budget.

✓ *Local Projects*

In our area, we advocated for and voted to fund important local community and infrastructure projects including:

- \$450,000 for the Child Study and Treatment Center.
- \$950,000 for Western State Hospital competency restoration.
- Another \$450,000 for a new civil ward at Western State.
- And \$1,950,000 for additional improvements at Western State.
- Paving and striping of the gravel parking lot at Fort Steilacoom Park for \$257,000.
- Replacing the Ponders water treatment plant to the tune of \$1,500,000.
- Countywide toxic woodstove emission reduction for \$1,500,000.
- \$21,000 for the DuPont Historical Museum

✓ *Building Classrooms to Reduce Overcrowding*

The capital budget also included **\$34.5 million to build new K-3 classrooms** to reduce over-crowding in our elementary schools, **\$34.7 million in new funding** for the School Construction Assistance Program, which helps local school districts and taxpayers, and **\$5.5 million for an innovative pilot program** to design and build K-3 classrooms using modular cross-laminated timber. *HB 2380*

Transportation

With the passage of an historic investment in our transportation system in 2015, Washington took a significant step forward in addressing our infrastructure crisis. But we had more to address this year to ensure a safe and reliable transportation system that provides mobility and transportation choices for all.

✓ *2016 Highlights*

Our supplemental 2016 transportation budget approved \$8.6 billion to fight gridlock, improve mobility, and increase safety. With better than expected bond revenue and federal funding (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act), I voted to approve: *HB 2524*

- A total of \$931,046,000 in new transportation funding from 2015 and 2016 transportation budgets.

- \$94 million for maintenance and preservation of our roads and bridges to keep travel safe and reliable.
- Addressing the Washington State Patrol staffing crisis by providing a 5 percent salary increase to officers.
- Freezing Tacoma Narrows Bridge tolls for a year through a \$2.5 million debt payment.
- Improving road safety by investing \$1.1 million in better rail crossings and adding 10 new incident response vehicles to help clear accidents quickly.
- Increasing reliability on Washington State Ferries by retiring the 34-car Hiyu and using the much larger Klahowya as a standby vessel when another ferry is temporarily offline.
- \$494 million in JBLM corridor improvements.

Military and Veteran Legislation

✓ *Suicide Awareness & Prevention and Protecting Employment Rights*

This year the Legislature had bipartisan approval of many bills that put our military service members and veterans first. Recognizing that suicide awareness and prevention is important to our military families, I voted to create a new task force to include education and training and implementation of advocacy efforts with key stakeholders to **help prevent suicide**. Another law I supported required the Attorney General to **protect service member employment rights** so service members in the National Guard have a way to resolve disputes with their employers when being deployed. And we expanded coverage for service member and veteran families for group disability coverage to ensure those who have sacrificed for our country get health care services they need.

✓ *Vet Assistance Fund Clarity, Hunting Licenses & Cemetery Grant Program*

We also streamlined the definitions that defined who qualified for the Veterans' Assistance Fund, **reducing the confusion about eligibility** that currently exists. Three types of hunting licenses are now available to members of the Washington State Guard and National Guard for no cost. The Washington state Cemetery Preservation Capital Grant Program was created, state route 99 was renamed the "William P. Stewart Memorial Highway" to honor a civil war veteran from Washington, and we issued Purple Heart license plates for more than one vehicle.

✓ *Next Year's Priorities*

I introduced several bills that I will continue to work hard on, including **assistance for veterans in small towns and rural areas, pro-bono legal help for our veterans, and consumer protections for active duty service members**.

The 2015 Wildfire season

Last year, our state was hit by terrible wildfires that cost the state nearly \$190 million in unbudgeted expenses to combat the fires. We needed to pay for those costs and did so with a one-time expenditure from the Rainy Day Fund.