



2018 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

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“Together, we are changing how Olympia works. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your 19th District representative.”

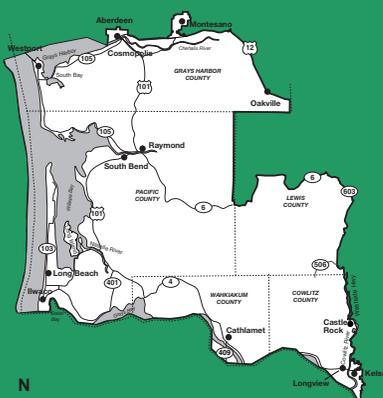
Dear Friends and Neighbors,

On March 8, the Legislature adjourned the 2018 session. When we began session, I had several goals, most of which were about achieving good results by ensuring “bad” bills, and even worse public policy, did not get put into Washington state statute. With these damage control goals in mind, I believe we got some good results.

In this newsletter, I will be sharing some of the highlights and disappointments of this intense and challenging session. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about state government or the policies discussed in this newsletter, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you in Olympia.

The 19th District includes several coastal areas from lower Grays Harbor County, to all of Pacific and Wahkiakum counties, and parts of west Lewis and Cowlitz counties.



The state’s supplemental operating budget

The 2018 supplemental operating budget increases state spending by \$1.2 billion in the 2017-19 biennium, and another \$600 million in the 2019-21 biennium. It also funds K-12 salary increases in the 2018-19 school year.

Helpful links you can access through your computer, smart phone or tablet

RepresentativeJimWalsh.com | Here you will find my contact information, bio, news releases, email updates, videos, opinion pieces, bills and other information.

Leg.wa.gov | You can find bill reports, committee agendas and information about upcoming activities in the Legislature here.

TVW.org | The state’s own version of C-SPAN, TVW broadcasts floor and committee action live online.

Fiscal.wa.gov | Interactive fiscal reports, project maps, budget bills and documents.

Legislative Hotline | (800) 562-6000

Budget gimmick

Lawmakers used an unusual budget maneuver to circumvent the three-fifths majority approval requirement to spend money in the state’s Budget Stabilization Account, also known as the “rainy day fund.”

During the House floor debate on this gimmick, I called it “a Ponzi scheme only Bernie Madoff could love.” This type of maneuvering sets a very bad precedent that might allow other shady budget gimmicks in the future. One of my priorities for the next session will be to make sure those don’t happen.

Working hard for you!

Please remember I work for you throughout the year, not just when the Legislature is in session. Please call or visit my office if you need assistance with state government, or have comments or concerns about legislation.



2018 SESSION REVIEW

State Representative Jim Walsh

Hirst

Hirst was the hot issue when the Legislature convened in January. The lack of a fix for the state Supreme Court's decision on the water-rights issue stalled the approval of the state's capital budget. Hirst slowed economic development in many parts of rural Washington and had the potential to cause an enormous tax shift to those who own properties with access to water. Lawmakers stood firm that a solution for property owners needed to be in place before striking a deal on the capital budget. It worked — we passed the Hirst fix within weeks of the start of session.

With the Hirst fix in place, we immediately approved the \$4.2 billion 2017-19 capital budget, which contains money for major projects across the state, including K-12 school buildings and renovations, affordable housing and mental health facilities.



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Bringing home capital budget funding

The capital budgets, both the delayed 2017-2019 budget and the on-time 2018 supplemental budget, contain funding for a number of good infrastructure projects for this area.

Some of these projects include:

- ✓ Dredging at the Westport and Ilwaco marinas,
- ✓ Campus improvements at Grays Harbor College;
- ✓ Construction of the long-delayed third courtroom at the Grays Harbor County Courthouse in Montesano;
- ✓ Renovation funding for the event facilities at Lake Sylvia;
- ✓ Rebuilding South Bend's elementary school;
- ✓ Erosion control at North Cove; and
- ✓ Naselle Hatchery renovations.



We also provided funding to expand the existing public shooting range at Toutle, which is north of Longview. The Toutle shooting range improvements make it possible for law enforcement officers to get their annual or biannual weapons certification close to home. Currently, they have to go as far away as Vancouver or Tacoma to do that.

Addressing homelessness

This year, I secured \$129,000 in capital budget funding for Community House, a sober-living facility in Longview that helps families and individuals become self-sufficient by providing case management, shelter, meals and clothing.

The myriad issues that cause homelessness can seem overwhelming. Community House is a good platform that should be copied, with best practices that encourage and protect vulnerable people in a housing crisis.

Oysters, marbled murrelets and the Department of Ecology

The troubled way the Department of Ecology operates, and this applies to the Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor oyster growers as well as other commercial development in the 19th District, is to bend and loophole the permitting process.

These projects are unique, but the Department of Ecology's reaction in dealing with the permit processes remains the same. The agency often changes the goal posts on permitting applicants in the middle of their application. This type of bureaucratic blockage is wrong.

In the coming session, I'll continue to work to rein in the Department of Ecology so that projects and economic opportunity are not stymied in our region and other rural areas across the state.

Managing state trust lands – the debate continues

We added some legislative oversight of the marbled murrelet Habitat Conservation Program, commonly called the "spotted owl 2.0." But more needs to be done to assert the Legislature's responsibility to manage state trust lands.

For decades, elected representatives have been hiding behind state agencies on this issue. And the results have been terrible – the spotted owl and now the marbled murrelet. We can't let bureaucrats make policy decisions about how state trust lands are managed – at least not without close supervision by the Legislature.

Open government

The Legislative Public Records Act (Senate Bill 6617) was actually an attempt by the Legislature to open up some, if not all, of legislative records to the public. Although the bill passed overwhelmingly in the Senate and House, I voted against it.

The reason I said "no" to this bill had more to do with the process than the policy. Rather than going through the usual series of public meetings, public hearings and discussion and debate, the bill was voted on within days of being introduced and passed on to the governor to sign. This kind of "swampy politics" needs to stop.

Typically, I don't agree with the governor on public policy matters, but he made the right choice by vetoing the bill. In the future, lawmakers will need to work together on a more deliberate and open approach to the disclosure of legislative records.

Use of force

A recent ruling by a Thurston County judge found the Legislature's attempt to amend an initiative (I-940) that would put new rules on police use of force violates the state's constitution.

While the amendment to the initiative, House Bill 3003, had strong bipartisan support, I voted "no." Process-wise, this was just as bad as the failed Legislative Public Records Act. To simplify slightly, we passed the amendment first and then the initiative it amended later.

Olympia has to stop forcing these clever "gimmicks" on the people of Washington. This ill-fated package, the recent raid on the state's rainy day fund, the ill-fated Legislative Public Records Act exemption – all of these legislative disasters share common traits: too much lawyerly game-playing and circumventing the rules. This isn't good for anyone.

Education funding

The Legislature has made impressive progress in putting more money in the education system. Individual student spending has increased from about \$8,800 to nearly \$13,900. This year, the Legislature completed another major hurdle by allocating \$776 million to teacher and administrative staff salaries.

No capital gains income tax

In what has become an annual tradition by some lawmakers, another proposal for a capital gains income tax was proposed and defeated this session.

No state carbon tax or related gasoline tax hikes

The carbon tax and its related burdens on households and employers was defeated during the final weeks of session. This is a big win for families, who would have paid for this tax at the gas pump, electricity hikes and in heating their homes.