

2016 Legislative Review



Capital budget

The capital budget, sometimes referred to as the “bricks and mortar” budget, funds infrastructure for K-12 education facilities, higher education institutions, state prisons and more. It also funds stewardship projects that protect our waterways, environment and farmlands. Forty-second District legislators secured funding for several projects this biennium, including:

- \$77,000 to begin the design and engineering phase of the much-needed Kendall Trail along SR 547 from the Kendall Elementary School to South Pass Road. This trail will help enhance safety and mobility along this stretch of highway, which is especially needed given recent tragedies;
- \$400,000 for the Pepin Creek realignment in Lynden to prevent future flooding and provide safe fish passage;
- \$71 million to renovate Western Washington University’s Carver Academic Facility;
- \$2 million for a new water pipeline between the Darigold plant and the Nooksack River;
- \$900,000 for the Blaine Marina cleanup;
- \$1.2 million for the Lummi Youth Wellness Center renovation; and
- \$4 million for hazardous waste cleanup in the Port of Bellingham.

You can view a map of all projects in the 42nd District by visiting fiscal.wa.gov.



Transportation - Largest gas tax in state history passes

We were both disappointed the Legislature passed a \$16 billion transportation tax package during the 2015 legislative session. This included an 11.9 cent state gas-tax increase in addition to other fees, making it one of the highest gas taxes in the nation and the largest gas-tax increase in state history. At the time of our vote, we did not feel the state Department of Transportation (WSDOT) had proven efficient enough to warrant this level of spending and debt. Since then, the WSDOT secretary has been removed. Under the direction of the governor, we have seen an I-405 tolling debacle, problems with the Bertha tunneling machine and cost overruns with the new 520 bridge, to name a few.

More accountability and efficiency with taxpayer dollars should have been in place before such a massive tax increase was considered. Washingtonians are now paying about \$12.60 in state and federal gas taxes every time they pull up to the gas pump for 20 gallons of gas.



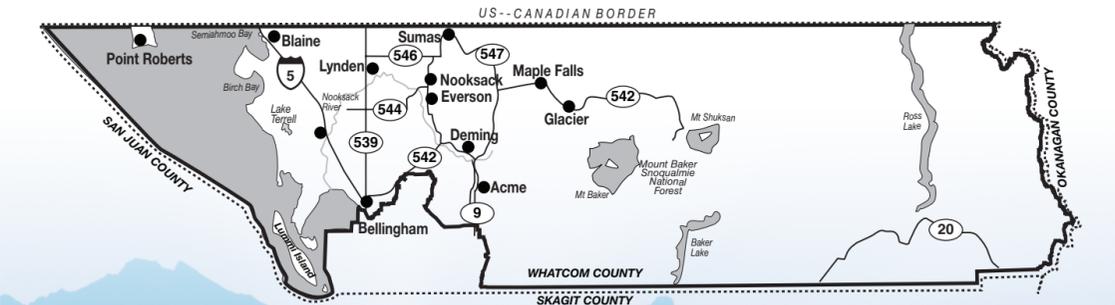
State Representatives
Vincent Buys
Luanne Van Werven
 P.O. Box 40600
 Olympia, WA 98504-0600

2016 Legislative Review

PRSR STD
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 SEATTLE, WA
 PERMIT NO. 1885

2016 Legislative Review

Representative **Vincent Buys** Representative **Luanne Van Werven**



42nd District

• 42nd District • 2016 Legislative Review



Spring 2016



Rep. Vincent Buys

OFFICE:

465 John L. O'Brien Building
 P.O. Box 40600
 Olympia, WA 98504-0600
 (360) 786-7854

EMAIL:

Vincent.Buys@leg.wa.gov

WEBSITE:

RepresentativeVincentBuys.com

COMMITTEES:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
(Ranking Republican)
- Appropriations



Rep. Luanne Van Werven

OFFICE:

419 John L. O'Brien Building
 P.O. Box 40600
 Olympia, WA 98504-0600
 (360) 786-7980

EMAIL:

Luanne.VanWerven@leg.wa.gov

WEBSITE:

RepresentativeLuanneVanWerven.com

COMMITTEES:

- Appropriations
- Higher Education
- State Government
(Assistant Ranking Republican)

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

During the last two legislative sessions, we worked hard to bring your Whatcom County voices to Olympia. We focused on improving schools, keeping neighborhoods safe, protecting farms and local jobs, while remembering all tax dollars come from you. As we make decisions and cast votes, we do so with these priorities in mind.

While we are frustrated with the special sessions the last two years, we are pleased with the results of the legislative sessions. This last year, state lawmakers:

- Took steps to address the teacher shortage;
- Prioritized vision screening for students;
- Held the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) secretary accountable;
- Provided Washington State Patrol troopers with pay raises;
- Restricted the use of toxic flame retardant chemicals;
- Saved public charter schools;
- Passed the Washington Cybercrime Act; and
- Created the Parent to Parent Program, which connects parents of individuals with developmental disabilities with support and resources.

In this legislative review, we will share some of the accomplishments from the last biennium and some of the disappointments as we looked to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Whatcom County and our great state.

Please remember, we are your state representatives year-round. Our work on your behalf continues. To be your voice in Olympia, we would like to hear your voice. Please feel free to call, email or write us any time. We are also available to meet with you.

It is an honor representing the people and communities of the 42nd Legislative District.

Proud to serve,

Vincent Buys
 Vincent Buys
 State Representative

Luanne Van Werven
 Luanne Van Werven
 State Representative

Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

Buys leads on House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee



For the past three years, I have led as the ranking Republican on the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Agriculture is one of Washington's top employers. We must help growers,

ranchers, miners, processors and others thrive in this economy, while still keeping in mind our duty to be good stewards of our environment. We also need to implement innovative, long-term water solutions that address our current and future residential, municipal, tribal and irrigation water needs.

One bill that passed the committee this year and was signed into law is my **House Bill 2634**, which allows the Washington Dairy Products Commission to conduct research related to dairy nutrients as commercial products. The benefits and commercial uses of dairy nutrients are vast, and this bill is an important investment in discovering how nutrients could be effectively used for crop fertilization and energy production. This will also be an important educational opportunity for consumers to see the practices of their local dairies and products.

Some relief for dairy farmers this year



Last summer, a federal judge ruled manure could be considered hazardous waste, however, I strongly disagree with this ruling. As a result, the Department of Ecology released draft language for water discharge permits based on state and federal laws. Chief among concerns with the new language was the potential for private groups and other third parties to sue dairies in federal court if they believed a dairy had violated its permit. After a public comment period that returned negative feedback and work sessions in House and Senate committees, I worked with fellow legislators and the Washington State Dairy Federation to craft a budget proviso for Ecology to develop a state-only permit. Unfortunately, that proviso was not included in final negotiations, but the budget did include \$100,000 to help dairies protect groundwater from manure contamination.

As we continue to work with Ecology and dairies on this issue, it's important an environmentally conscious solution that protects dairies from industry-threatening lawsuits prevails.

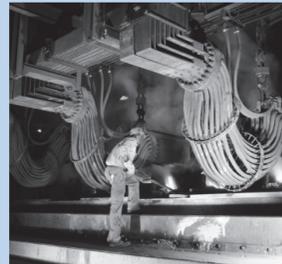


Bill to end "revenge porn" signed into law

Legislation I sponsored to outlaw the sharing of sexually explicit photos for the purpose of humiliating another individual – an act called 'revenge porn' – was signed into law. **House Bill 1272** provides victims recourse by making the distribution of intimate images of others, without their consent, a class C felony on the second offense.

Passage of this bill was a highlight for me this biennium. This legislation has required several years of work, and I'm thankful for my colleagues and stakeholders who put countless hours into making this bill a reality.

Alcoa Intalco - supplemental operating budget



Great news for our region! Alcoa and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) reached a new tentative power agreement that we hope will keep the Intalco Works smelter

open through February 2018. We commend the work of BPA and Alcoa to make this happen. The strong support for the Intalco facility in the community and the \$3 million in the supplemental operating budget for on-site worker training at Bellingham Technical College to help keep the plant operational were also factors in making this happen. It was a key reason why we supported the supplemental budget.

Last year began a new biennium, which meant lawmakers were tasked with crafting a new, two-year spending plan. It took a record 176 days to accomplish that task, but we ended on a high note with historic investments in K-12 education, higher education and mental health. The bipartisan, \$38 billion operating budget we passed last July:

- invested an additional \$1.3 billion in K-12 basic education;

- reduced class sizes in grades K-3;
- reduced the cost of tuition at the state's four-year colleges and universities and two-year community colleges, a huge win for students and middle-class families;
- made significant investments in treatment and capacity for our mentally ill;
- increased funding for state parks; and
- **was accomplished WITHOUT major taxes increases.**

This year's supplemental budget builds on the historic investments we made last year, by investing:

- \$190 million in emergency funding for wildfire recovery from last summer's wildfires;
- \$40 million for mental-health system improvements;
- \$4.3 million for health home services;
- \$4.2 million to keep charter schools open; and
- \$8 million to backfill costs to keep tuition reduced at state colleges and universities.

We were able to do this without tax increases. House Democrats and the governor had proposed raiding the rainy day fund for non-emergency spending, raising taxes by \$120 million, and ignoring our state's budget four-year outlook, a requirement that ensures fiscal responsibility.

Governor vetoes 27 bills

During the last week of session, the governor threatened to veto legislation unless we could reach a budget agreement by the March 10 deadline. When an agreement was not reached, he vetoed 27 bills that had broad bipartisan support. Both parties expressed their frustration with this move. The governor's actions were unnecessary and did nothing to help budget negotiations. In fact, his actions meant lawmakers had to stay in special session even longer as they voted to override his vetoes. He vetoed legislation that would have:

- removed obstacles for higher education students with disabilities;
- created jobs by authorizing the growing of industrial hemp;
- reauthorized the Invasive Species Council account;
- reduced the costs of prescription drugs; and
- increased the availability of affordable housing.

It requires a lot of hard work to get legislation through the legislative process. It is disappointing and unfortunate he chose this veto action instead of being more proactive in reaching a budget solution.

Efficiency, cost-savings and common sense – some would say those words are not usually associated with government, but I believe they should be. One of my objectives as I serve in Olympia is to bring accountability and transparency to the issues I am working on.

Statewide advisory ballot measures

My **House Bill 2623**, which eliminates recounts on non-binding statewide advisory ballot measures, has been signed into law by the governor. It received strong bipartisan support and was supported by our local county auditors. It has the potential to save the state money, and I am always happy to reduce the burden on our hard-working taxpayers in Whatcom County and around the state.



Textbook transparency legislation

I am very excited to be sitting on the House Higher Education Committee. Working with students has given me the drive to assist them on higher education and college affordability issues. Last year, historic tuition cuts were made but more needs to be done. The price tag of a college education has grown to become a financial hardship for many students and their families.

I introduced legislation that would inform community and technical college students of the costs for required course materials during registration. **House Bill 2796** was part of a package of bills House Republicans pushed to help reduce costs and add transparency to some of the expenses associated with higher education.

I have heard from many students about the cost of textbooks and materials. By providing the costs in advance, this transparency measure would have encouraged students to look at online alternatives to expensive textbooks.

The bill did not pass this year, and while disappointing, I will work on this important policy during the interim and bring it forward again next year.

A four-year college degree is not for everyone. Industries in Whatcom County have told me there is a real need for people with the skills like welding, agriculture and construction. Career and technical education (CTE) programs play a vital role, especially at a time when many struggle with the affordability of a higher education. We proposed restoring CTE program funding and will continue to do so in upcoming sessions as it combines core academics with real-world application in programs such as shop class and student leadership organizations like Future Farmers of America. Many of these programs provide skills that can lead to good family-sustaining jobs and careers.



Representative Buys and Van Werven having a discussion.