

## CAPITAL BUDGET

The Legislature also passed a bipartisan capital budget this session. This is the budget that addresses our infrastructure needs for schools, higher education institutions, prisons, as well as works with local governments and non-profits on infrastructure and long-term investments. In this year's supplemental capital budget were able to secure:

- \$209,000 for planning and design phase of the Chelan County Emergency Fire Operations Center;
- \$1.1 million for the Pateros water system, which was damaged in the Methow Fire;
- \$500,000 for the Twisp City Hall/Emergency Response Center; and
- \$1 million to add more behavioral health beds in the region to address mental health needs.

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## 2016 Legislative Review 12th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



### Representative Cary Condotta



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- Appropriations
- Finance

## REVIEW

## 2016 LEGISLATIVE



**Rep. Cary Condotta**

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## 2016 Legislative Review 12<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



### Representative Cary Condotta

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Legislature adjourned on March 29, after a 20-day special session. It was disappointing we couldn't reach an agreement in the 60-day regular session, but many are not aware of the dynamic we are dealing with in Olympia. The state House of Representatives is controlled by the Democrats by a slim majority, 50-48.

The Senate is controlled by Republicans 25-23, and one Democrat actually caucuses with the Republicans. If you add

it up, that is 73 Republicans, 73 Democrats, and one in the middle. It doesn't get any closer than that and it relates itself to the recent challenging budget negotiations we have had—slim majorities in both chambers by different parties. Each with a passion for what they believe is sensible budgeting and fiscal responsibility. It requires us to work together or nothing would get through the legislative process. I think you will find in this update we have accomplished a lot in the last two years.

I hope you find this legislative review of the last biennium informative and helpful. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the Legislature please do not hesitate to contact me. I also encourage you to contact me if you need any assistance with a state government issue. My door is always open.

Sincerely,

**Cary Condotta**  
12th District Representative



## OPERATING BUDGET

There was no reason to go into a special session this year. We had just passed a two-year \$38 billion state operating budget after a 173-day, record-setting session. It was a strong, bipartisan budget that:



- invested an additional \$1.3 billion in K-12 basic education;
- reduced class size 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
- accomplished these things **with NO major tax increases**.

Supplemental budgets should not include major policy changes and large expenditures except for emergencies like wildfires and flooding, and unexpected shifts in entitlement programs. Unfortunately, the debate around the supplemental budget this year revolved around House Democrats wanting to increase spending by:

- raiding the rainy day fund for non-emergency spending;
- relying on tax increases;
- relying on a budget gimmick related to the McCleary education ruling for K-3 class size reductions; and
- ignoring our state's four-year budget outlook.

None of these proposals were included in the final supplemental operating budget. However, additional spending, along with declining revenue and some economic uncertainty was still a concern for me, so I voted "no." Plus, the ending fund balance in the four-year budget outlook was only \$9 million. I am worried about sustainability and more roller coaster budgets. I am also opposed to the continued raiding of the Public Works Trust Fund, a low-interest loan account our local governments rely on to address infrastructure projects.



## GOVERNOR VETOES 27 BILLS

During the last week of the 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. The governor's actions were unnecessary and did nothing to help budget negotiations. Both parties expressed frustration with this move. He vetoed legislation that would have:

- removed obstacles for higher education students with disabilities;
- assisted the state Apple Commission to help promote the apple industry;
- promoted economic development;
- created jobs by authorizing the growing of industrial hemp;
- reauthorized the Invasive Species Council account; and
- reduced the costs of prescription drugs.

It is disappointing he chose to veto legislation instead of being more proactive in reaching a budget solution. On the last day of special session the House and Senate did vote to override his vetoes—on each and every bill. It was a historic event as only a handful of vetoes have ever been overridden.

## SUCCESSES

In my opening letter, I touched on the successes of last year's budget. This year, despite the extra session to pass our supplemental plan, there were several accomplishments. For example, state lawmakers:

- created a framework for K-12 education funding solutions;
- saved public charter schools;
- took steps to address the teacher shortage;
- prioritized vision screening for students;
- held the WSDOT secretary accountable;
- provided Washington State Patrol with pay raises;
- passed the Washington Cybercrime Act; and
- created the Parent to Parent Program that connects parents of individuals with developmental disabilities with support and resources.

## REINING IN STATE AGENCIES

I received numerous complaints about the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries elevator inspection program in the last year. I introduced legislation to bring it under control. While the bill did not make it through the legislative process, it brought attention to the issue. The program is now under review, and the department will report back to us by



the end of the year on how they will improve this program and make it more user-friendly. I will continue to pursue all agencies who are not giving proper service to our constituents.

## TRANSPORTATION

In the 2015 session the Legislature passed a \$16 billion transportation gas tax revenue package. Taxpayers in Washington state now pay about \$13.60 in state and federal gas taxes every time they pull up to the gas pump for 20 gallons of gas. It is one of the highest gas taxes in the nation. It is not just the gas tax—the package increased weight and license fees, and it falls disproportionately on the residents in rural areas who commute long distances.

I voted against the tax package. At the time of my vote, I did not believe the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) had proven efficient enough to warrant this level of spending and debt. This session, the Senate backed this up, as they decided not to confirm Secretary of Transportation Lynn Peterson to her position, basically removing her from her job. The WSDOT, under the governor's direction, has overseen many high-priced failures including the I-405 tolling debacle, the Bertha tunneling machine, and cost overruns with the new 520 bridge. The department has many hard-working employees, but it was time for new leadership.

I also voted against the supplemental transportation budget this session. It uses federal funds to seek additional federal dollars for a road-user-charge pilot project or vehicle miles travelled charge. This is not a concept I support.

