



State Representative Mark Harmsworth



2016 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

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COMMITTEES:

- Transportation (Assistant Ranking Member)
- Technology and Economic Development
- Rules

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This was a challenging session. After many weeks of tense discussions and hard decisions, we produced strongly supported bipartisan supplemental operating, capital and transportation budgets. These minor changes to the already approved two-year plan will put us in a much better position to continue to make improvements in 2017.

Making sure local projects are supported is one of the most important aspects of my job. Inside this newsletter you can read more about the transportation and capital construction projects for our district I was able to help through the legislative process.

Both sides of the aisle worked hard to approve a balanced budget that provides for a significant increase in education funding. In just four years we have invested an additional \$4.7 billion in our education spending, a 36 percent overall increase.

While I am glad to see measurable progress is being made, there is more work ahead. We must meet the goal of fully funding basic education, continue to advance critical transportation solutions, prioritize state spending and minimize tax burdens. I will continue to seek solutions to reduce traffic congestion and work to promote efficiency in transportation projects throughout the state.

Holding government accountable and protecting taxpayers are responsibilities I take seriously. It is my job to be an effective voice for you on the issues you care about the most. This newsletter highlights some of my activities in Olympia.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature of Mark Harmsworth, written in a cursive style.

Mark Harmsworth
State Representative • 44th Legislative District



Education

Since 2012, lawmakers in Olympia have focused their efforts on making significant funding reforms for K-12 education. The results of this work have made Washington one of the fastest growing states in the nation for increased education spending.

The \$38.2 billion 2015-17 state operating budget adopted last June increased education funding by nearly \$3 billion. Education funding now accounts for 48 percent of the state's total operating budget - the largest amount in state history.

These reforms include K-3 class size reductions, addressing teacher shortages, expanding full-day kindergarten, fully funding teacher COLAs, and providing for a large increase for materials, supplies and operating costs. Plus, we reduced tuition at our public colleges and universities and made large investments in early learning and education. This responsible budget planning was done within our existing revenue and does not require an increase to our taxes.

Public charter schools reaffirmed



Charter schools improve education by giving parents more choices, offering students more creative approaches to learning and a more personalized learning environment.

is welcome news for charter school students and their families. This bill reestablishes the Washington State Charter School Commission and keeps these schools free to the public. Funding will be provided through the Opportunity Pathways account, a constitutionally unrestricted source of lottery revenue.

Charter schools are a great option for kids with different learning styles and challenges. These schools help to narrow the opportunity gap and strengthen our entire education system.

With the passage of Senate Bill 6194, Washington has now rejoined 42 other states in offering charter schools. This

Responsible budgets approved

The Legislature approved recent state budgets with strong bipartisan support. Despite proposals for large tax increases on our small businesses, personal income and services, new tax increases were not included in the final operating budget.

The 2016 supplemental operating budget makes only minor changes to the already-approved 2015-2017 plan. This compromise budget increases state spending by .05 percent in the context of a \$38 billion two-year plan. It should be considered a win for taxpayers.

The supplemental operating budget addresses mental health treatment and care, homelessness, costs of the 2015 wildfires and maintains our historic tuition cuts at state colleges and universities. Additionally, this budget does not unnecessarily take money out of our state's rainy day fund, which should only be used for one-time emergencies or for serious economic downturns.

Also included in the supplemental capital budget, which helps with the construction and repair of public buildings and other long-term investments, is an additional \$76 million for K-12 grade school building construction, \$36 million for the School Construction Assistance Grant Program and \$40 million for K-3 class-size reduction efforts.

Capital budget includes local project funding

I was glad help get the following local construction projects approved for our district:

- **Lake Stevens Civic Center \$309,000**
Lake Stevens is one of the fastest growing cities in the county and there has been an increasing need for a civic center and gathering place as the city expands.
- **Mill Creek Public Works \$257,000**
The community has outgrown the current facilities. This money will help provide some of the construction costs for a new public works building.
- **Cavelero Park \$500,000**
This funding will help build a regional park for the city of Lake Stevens and Snohomish County.



Teacher shortages

School principals throughout the state are struggling to find substitute teachers and permanent teaching staff. This lack of teachers impacts school district operations and reduces the overall quality of education. The current teacher shortage is the result of many factors, including increasing enrollments and smaller K-3 class sizes. By working on new approaches now, we can address this temporary gap. We need to reduce barriers for those hoping to enter the teaching profession, while at the same time keeping the highest possible standards in place.

This year I was glad to support Senate Bill 6455 that will provide resources for the recruitment and retaining of professional teaching staff. This legislation focuses on providing alternative routes to teaching certification, recruitment into teacher preparation programs and certification for out-of-state teachers. In addition, school districts in need of substitute teachers can now employ retired teachers without putting their retirement benefits in jeopardy. By allowing these highly experienced teachers to return to the classroom we can help students and school districts while still looking for highly qualified permanent staff.

Supplemental transportation budget

As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I was happy to help get the supplemental transportation budget approved. Among the projects in this budget is an additional \$1 million set aside for corridor improvements, which includes plans for State Route 522. Other projects I strongly supported include \$1.5 million for the trestle redesign for U.S. 2, covering State Route 204 and 20th Street. I also helped to secure \$4.5 million to fix the damage to the sinking roadway on 35th Avenue SE, particularly at the portion over the Penny Creek crossing.



Protecting vehicle owners

My bill protecting individuals from the incorrect buyer's name being listed on a report of sale for an abandoned vehicle was signed into law this year. House Bill 2274 addresses a loophole in Washington state vehicle transfer law that allows an individual to be unknowingly listed on a report of sale, transfer, or a subsequently abandoned vehicle. Until now, criminals could abandon cars and file reports in the name of unsuspecting people, leaving them responsible for towing and storage fees. By ensuring vehicle reports of sale are filed correctly, we can protect the purchaser, or any individual, from being listed as the owner of a vehicle by a nefarious seller trying to get rid of a car.

Stop the express lane tolling on I-405

For those of us who frequently travel the eastside corridor, the new express toll lanes (ETLs) are a disaster. We are not getting the service or traffic congestion relief we were originally promised.

Recently, the Washington State Transportation Commission trimmed express-lane tolling hours on I-405, opening the lanes to drivers on weeknights, weekends and on major holidays. While I am extremely pleased to see some of the changes I proposed earlier in the year being put into place, they do not go far enough. We need to address the fundamental root issue — traffic congestion during peak hours. If the goal is relief from traffic and not revenue, we need to take out the two ETL lanes and go back to two-plus in the HOV lanes.

Tolling on I-405 is a step toward changing how we pay for roads. It allows the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to use toll revenue for anything it wants. WSDOT has already done studies for tolling on I-5 and other highways in our region. With billions of dollars needed to improve infrastructure, a large portion could potentially come from tolling highways. It is possible traffic congestion relief would come, but only because people would be "priced" off major roadways.

I will continue to work hard to protect commuters and find ways to reduce traffic. Instead of wasting money on sinking pontoons and digging tunnels, we need to refocus our efforts on road maintenance and traffic congestion relief. We need our roadways to be well-maintained and affordable for all drivers.

More 2016 session highlights

- ✓ Addressing Washington State Patrol recruitment, retention and pay raises. House Bill 2872
- ✓ Holding the WSDOT secretary accountable for agency failures. SGA 9137
- ✓ Establishing Washington Cybercrime Act. House Bill 2375
- ✓ Approving the Cybersecurity Jobs Act which puts a process in place for detecting and responding to security incidents. Senate Bill 6528
- ✓ Strengthening data breach notification requirements. House Bill 1078
- ✓ Creating the Parent to Parent Program – a statewide program that connects parents of individuals with developmental disabilities with support and resources. House Bill 2394

I WORK FOR YOU



Please remember that while the Legislature only meets a few months each year, I am your state representative year-round. We truly are a citizen Legislature, a place where the people really do make a difference. Please call or visit any time you need assistance with state government or have comments, questions or concerns regarding legislation. For your convenience, I maintain a district office in Mill Creek from now through December. My office phone number is (425) 225-5584 and my email is mark.harmsworth@leg.wa.gov

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State Representative
Mark Harmsworth

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“Working hard for you – improving our community and holding government accountable.”