



Representative

Jay Rodne

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Committees:

- Judiciary (Ranking Republican)
- Transportation
- Health Care & Wellness

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2016 legislative session is behind us and I am finally back home enjoying all our communities have to offer. Due to philosophical disagreements between the Republican-controlled Senate and the Democrat-controlled House, lawmakers did have to enter a 20-day special session to wrap up work on the budget. In the end, Republicans held the line on preventing \$120 million in proposed tax increases. Overall, the majority of lawmakers are pleased with the budget outcome as it makes important investments in our students, working families and the most vulnerable.

In addition to the supplemental budget, we accomplished a lot for Washingtonians in 2016:

- We took steps to establish a framework for K-12 education funding solutions for 2017 in our efforts to comply with the state Supreme Court's *McCleary* ruling;
- Made some headway in addressing the teacher shortage;
- Saved public charter schools, which were invalidated by the state Supreme Court last September;
- Passed the Washington Cybercrime Act, which will give prosecutors important tools necessary in this new digital communications era;
- Held the secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation accountable; and
- Much more.

As we take the next few months to gear up for the 2017 legislative session, I encourage you to keep in touch. Please continue contacting my office with your questions, concerns, and ideas for improving state government. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you!

Rep. Jay Rodne
5th Legislative District



Experiencing new cultures with Korean and Peruvian exchange students

The past few years, I have had the privilege of meeting with students participating in Snoqualmie Sister Cities Association's exchange program between Gangjin, Korea and Chacacayo, Peru and Snoqualmie Valley. This year, I took them on a tour of the Capitol and gave them an inside look at the legislative process. I'm looking forward to meeting the new group of students next year!

Staying connected

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2015-17 operating budget puts first dollar toward education

The two-year budget we passed in 2015 came with some historic achievements in K-12 and higher education funding. It invests an additional \$2.9 billion in K-12 education, representing a 19 percent increase. This includes significant dollars toward expansion of full-day kindergarten, reducing class sizes in grades K-3, and monies for materials, supplies and operating costs. Plus, voter-approved teacher cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) were reinstated in addition to a \$152 million increase for one-time salary raises. Forty-eight percent of the state budget is now directed for K-12 education – the largest amount in more than 30 years.

With regard to higher education, we cut tuition across the board: 15 percent at research institutions (University of Washington and Washington State University), 20 percent at regional universities, and 5 percent at community and technical colleges. This set our state apart from the rest as being the only state to reduce college tuition for its public colleges and universities.

We made important and necessary investments in early learning programs, mental-health services, and long-term care, as well.

This session was a supplemental budget year, meant for making only minor adjustments to the biennial spending plan passed last June. These adjustments are usually made due to emergencies, like 2015's devastating wildfire season, and caseload forecasts. For the most part, we kept to the true spirit of a supplemental budget year by avoiding tax increases originally proposed by Democrats and the governor. I am disappointed with the governor's actions to veto sections of the budget that now put it out of balance with the four-year outlook, a fiscally responsible requirement passed in 2012.

That said, there are a number of accomplishments worth celebrating. Here are some of the highlights:

- \$15 million for K-12 education, including \$5 million to recruit and retain K-12 staff;
- More than \$40 million for mental-health programs;
- \$4.2 million to keep public charter schools open;
- \$16 million for early learning and child care; and
- \$190 million from the Budget Stabilization Account, our state's rainy-day fund, to pay for last year's wildfires.

On track for 2018 McCleary deadline



The first bill signed into law in 2016 was Senate Bill 6195. This legislation requires the Legislature to eliminate the state's dependence on local levies for K-12 education by the end of 2017. As directed by the bill, an education funding task force will make recommendations to the Legislature based on interim research to determine the state's reliance on local school levy dollars and other factors contributing to basic education funding. Passing this bill was the first step to ensuring we have the appropriate data to move forward on a sustainable K-12 funding model.

Saving public charter schools



After the state Supreme Court invalidated Washington's eight public charter schools just before the school year began last September, many lawmakers came into the 2016 session determined to find a way to save these schools. Charter schools have been a great answer to more than 1,100 students and families when the traditional school model has failed to fit their individual needs. Republicans and a group of Democrats led the Legislature on the effort this year, and we successfully passed Senate Bill

6194 allowing charter schools to continue. The bill provides that funding for the schools will be through the Opportunity Pathways account, a constitutionally unrestricted funding source of lottery revenue. Even though the governor did not sign the bill, the legislation went into effect April 4.

Major strides in mental-health system improvements



Rep. Jay Rodne (center) with Nancy (left) and Doug Reuter (right), parents of Joel Reuter.

The Legislature made a number of important investments in our state's system. The 2015-17 operating budget invested nearly \$80 million in mental health to address recent court mandates, and the 2016 supplemental budget invested another \$40 million, which includes almost \$7 million for additional staffing at Western State Hospital.

We have passed a number of mental-health system reforms, as well. One of these is Joel's Law, which I co-sponsored and was signed into law last May. It allows family members of individuals with mental illness who pose a threat to themselves or others to petition the courts for involuntary commitment. It is named after Joel Reuter, a Seattle man who was shot and killed by police in 2013 after experiencing a severe bipolar episode.

Another bill I sponsored to maintain mental-health inpatient safety was signed into law last year, as well. House Bill 1599 allows the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to continue ordering the transfer of violent mental-health inpatients to secure Department of Corrections' facilities. DSHS has only used its authority to do this once since 2010, but it's vital this option continues to be available in order to maintain patient and staff safety.

In addition to funding, we pushed for more oversight over our state's psychiatric hospitals – Western State Hospital and Eastern State Hospital. The magnitude of safety risks and staff losses at both hospitals is unacceptable, and has threatened continued federal funding. A bill I co-sponsored this session, House Bill 2453, would establish a task force to make recommendations related to improving staffing and workforce development, and overall quality of care for patients. The legislation also would create the Governor's Behavioral Health Innovation Fund for monies specifically dedicated to improving state-hospital operations, staff and patient safety, and patient outcomes. The bill did not make it through the legislative process this year but we are looking ahead to 2017. Legislation similar to this, Senate Bill 6656, was signed into law this year, but the governor vetoed several key reforms, including a section that would have helped with the hospitals' understaffing issues.

Our state's mental-health system is broken, and with safety issues causing staffing shortages at our state's institutions, it's important we continue prioritizing improvements and reforms.

Investing in our roads

Last year, the Legislature passed a transportation investment package that funded a number of important projects in our district as well as enacted several accountability reforms for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). These reforms include encouraging WSDOT to use design-build on projects costing more than \$2 million and adding congestion relief and freight mobility to its transportation goals. We also passed a supplemental transportation budget this year that added a couple more important projects for the 5th District. Here's a list of projects that will affect our communities:

- SR 18/I-90 interchange corridor project;
- I-90/Front Street interchange;
- I-90 through Snoqualmie Pass corridor improvements;
- I-405 corridor widening between Renton and Lynnwood;
- I-90 shoulder restriping between Issaquah and Eastgate;
- Corridor safety study along SR 169; and
- Improvements to arterial roads in North Bend near Exit 34 on I-90.

The latest on I-405

There was some movement this year by the Legislature and the Washington State Transportation Commission to make improvements to the tolling system on I-405, but some believe those changes don't go far enough. About \$45 million is dedicated in the 2016 supplemental transportation budget to make improvements on the stretch of the highway between I-5 and SR 520. And recently, the Commission decided to make the highway toll-free on nights and weekends. You can send your thoughts and feedback about the tolling by emailing WSDOT at 405expresstollanes@wsdot.wa.gov. Of course, you're always encouraged to contact me with your thoughts, as well.