

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

LEONARD CHRISTIAN

4TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PO Box 40600 • Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

LEONARD CHRISTIAN

4TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

April 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I'm writing to give you some of the highlights of the 2014 legislative session, which ended without a special session on March 13. As I write this newsletter, my family's thoughts and prayers go out to the families and first responders of the Oso mudslide. We legislators will certainly do whatever we can to help them at the state level.

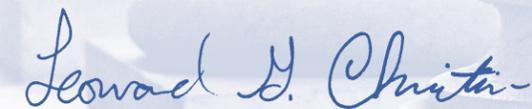
Since this was a short session, the Legislature worked on "supplemental" budgets that made minor changes to the larger budgets that were approved last year. Despite the efforts of some in Olympia to raise your taxes, I'm happy to report we adjourned without major tax hikes.

It was a real pleasure to serve and visit with 4th District residents, some of whom made the long trip to Olympia during session. From dentists and teachers to students and even my own pastor, I so much enjoyed spending time with folks from home.

Since being appointed to the state House of Representatives in January, it's been a busy and wonderful time. Now that I'm back in Spokane Valley I look forward to meeting with as many of you as possible. I would be happy to set up a time to meet with you and discuss your concerns.

It is a great honor to serve as your state representative.

Sincerely,



Leonard Christian
State Representative
4th Legislative District



OLYMPIA OFFICE:

425 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

OLYMPIA PHONE:

(360) 786-7820

E-MAIL:

Leonard.Christian@leg.wa.gov

WEBSITE:

www.RepresentativeLeonardChristian.com

TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:

(800) 562-6000

TTY (HARD OF HEARING):

(800) 635-9993

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Appropriations
- Capital Budget
- Government Operations & Elections
- Labor & Workforce Development
- Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government & Information Technology



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

LEONARD CHRISTIAN

UPDATE ON BALLOT SECURITY BILL

I introduced legislation to promote ballot security by using web cameras in areas where ballots are stored. Having spent many years involved in the election process, I know that voters want their ballots to be secure and their votes to count. Although my bill did not pass this year, I am continuing to work with county auditors and others to make sure our election process is as transparent and secure as possible and to avoid additional costs to taxpayers, using existing equipment when possible.

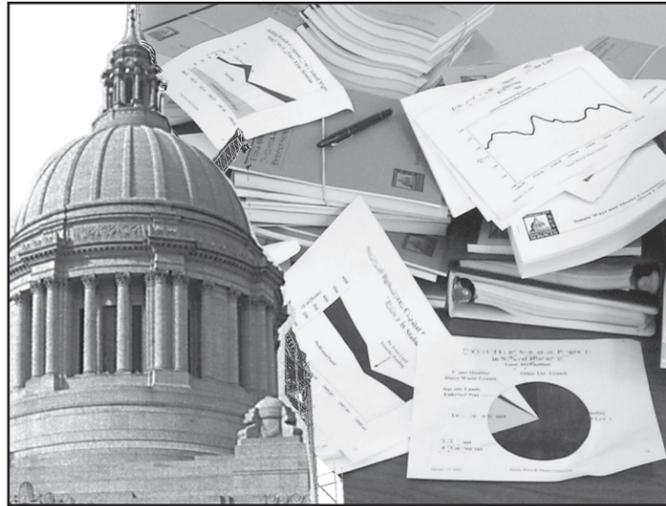
HB 2515-MY PRIVACY BILL BECOMES LAW

A privacy bill I sponsored is now law. HB 2515 deals with personal data acquired by the state when it estimates populations – for example, during local censuses or annexations. My bill protects personal information by exempting it from public inspection and copying, and requires personal data to be destroyed once the population estimate is done.



ABORTION MANDATE STOPPED

Some great news coming out of this session is the failure of a bill that would have required every health insurance policy in the state to cover abortions. I spoke against this bill in the House. The pro-life community showed up in force in Olympia to oppose the mandate, testifying at committee hearings and lobbying legislators.



BUDGETS

There are three budgets that fund state government: operating (the main one), transportation and capital (for construction).

As a member of both the Appropriations and Capital Budget committees, I spent a lot of time working on budget matters and trying to make sure our tax dollars are used more efficiently.

Operating budget

There were many things to like in this budget: it restrained spending, didn't raise taxes, had no new land acquisitions and prioritized funding for education and the most vulnerable.

BIG TAX HIKES AVERTED

In January Gov. Jay Inslee proposed a \$200 million tax increase. House Democrats offered their own tax-increase bill, HB 2803, which would add billions in new taxes to almost anything energy related. Fortunately, neither of these proposals passed.

Although taxpayers avoided a big tax increase this year, Gov. Inslee has hinted at increased

However, once again it did raise and create some new fees and assumed that the state will receive \$51 million in new revenues from marijuana taxes – yet we currently have no way to track or collect those revenues. For those reasons I voted “no.”

Transportation budget

Although our state and district badly need road improvements, the supplemental transportation budget was short on funding for the Spokane area.

It raised car license fees to pay for a new ferry, and gave the state Department of Transportation (WSDOT) an extra \$172 million for the troubled 520 bridge project in Seattle. So far WSDOT has blown through more than \$400 million on the 520 project alone. We deserve our fair share, and we didn't get it in this budget.

Capital budget

One of my biggest disappointments this year was the Legislature's failure to pass a capital budget. I worked hard in the Capital Budget Committee to secure \$1 million for Spokane Valley Tech to complete its expansion. This is an excellent investment because SVT trains students to enter the workforce with good-paying jobs right after high school graduation. Next year it will again be one of my top priorities.

government spending next year – which, of course, would require higher taxes.

Like most of you, I am strongly opposed to tax increases. State government should live within its means and prioritize spending, just like Washington families must do.

MILITARY & VETERANS

The 4th District is home to many current and former members of the Armed Services – myself included (I served more than 20 years in the Air Force). Military issues are important to all of us.

I was proud to co-sponsor a bill that helps military dependents who need assistance for developmental disabilities. Dependents who temporarily leave the state – to stay with family, for example – when their service member is deployed will no longer have to re-apply for services when they return.

We also passed a great bill giving veterans the



option of a veteran designation on their driver's licenses and identicards issued by the state Department of Licensing.

ASSAULT ON JOB-CREATORS

One of the five committees I serve on in the House of Representatives is the Labor and Workforce Development Committee. Given our state's lackluster economy, the number of anti-business bills introduced in this committee was surprising to me. Although many passed out of committee despite my opposition, most of them died in the Senate.

Here are a few of the proposals:

- **Minimum wage increase to \$12 per hour.** Washington already has the highest minimum wage rate in the nation at \$9.32 per hour. Small business owners would be forced to pass the increase on to their customers and that would hurt every resident – especially those on fixed incomes.
- **Mandatory paid sick leave.** Imposed on employers with more than four employees, it would put the heaviest burden on the smallest businesses.
- **Paid vacation leave.** Would have required employers with 25 or more employees to provide paid vacation leave of up to 120 hours per year.

- **Misclassification of independent contractors.** Attempted to create a wholesale change in independent contractor laws, resulting in more workers being classified as “employees” rather than “independent contractors.”

We all want Washington residents to have good jobs with good benefits, but these government mandates are not the way to go. The best way to help workers is to create a stable regulatory and business climate so business can expand and more people can get back to work.

A business perspective

The other day I spoke with a local hotel owner who owns two similar hotels, one in Washington and one in Idaho. He said the Washington hotel costs him almost \$143,000 more per year to operate than the one in Idaho.

Clearly, Washington's business climate needs fixing. It's far too expensive to run a business, and the result is lost jobs and economic opportunities. One of my priorities for next session is pursuing reforms that will make our state a better place to create jobs and do business.