

2014 Legislative Review

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2014 Legislative Review

47th DISTRICT

Bill to create certainty, stability for foster children and families a work in progress

At the request of a constituent, I worked on legislation to give foster children and families earlier stability. **House Bill 2582** would have set in place a structure for foster children, who have no chance of going back to their parents, to be adopted into a stable, loving home more quickly. It would have required the initiation of the termination of parental rights in very specific situations to be started months earlier than in the current system.

This bill passed the House 91-5, and actually passed the Senate, too. But an amendment caused some problems that couldn't be agreed to by all the necessary agencies. So, just before crossing the finish line, the bill died. However, this legislation is very close to being something that could become law next year.

I'll be working with others across the aisle and the Senate to come up with acceptable language that will adequately protect parental rights while still getting foster children into stable, loving homes earlier. My hope is that next session we will be able to significantly improve these children's lives.

Mark offers the traditional prayer before the beginning of floor session.



Working toward a more open, transparent process

As your state representative, one of my greatest frustrations has been with how our legislative process has evolved into a system that inhibits bipartisan discussion. I believe that making decisions in single party caucuses behind closed doors does not result in the best legislation. Having talked with legislators from other states, I know it is not this way across the country. So I have been working to make our legislative process more bipartisan and transparent. We have a long way go, but I'm committed to these efforts.



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47th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Spring 2014

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your state representative in the People's House in Olympia. My goal is to make sure you know I work for you year-round and I want to hear from you as much as possible. Our two-way conversation is always helpful as we work alongside each other, addressing challenges and taking advantage of positive opportunities around the state and in our local communities.

Representative Mark Hargrove Keeping in Touch

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Committees:

- Transportation
(Assistant Ranking Republican)
- Education
- Higher Education

In speaking with thousands of residents around the 47th District, you told me you want:

- A sustainable state budget that lives within current revenues;
- A world-class education system that offers every child the opportunity to succeed in life;
- A responsible and responsive government that serves the people;
- A government structure that does not hamper private-sector job growth and retention; and,
- A government that is resized to focus on keeping us safe and free to exercise personal liberty and responsibility.

I have worked hard to live up to your expectations. I hope the information provided in this newsletter gives you a better idea of how the Legislature has been working, and, more specifically, how I have been working on ideas you, my constituents, have brought to my attention.

I am always available to meet with constituents to listen to new and innovative solutions to solving issues facing the 47th District and the state. If there is a specific issue you believe should be addressed by the Legislature, or you need assistance navigating a state agency or finding a state service, please feel free to contact my office.

Again, thank you for allowing me to serve as your state representative. It is truly an honor.

Sincerely,

Mark Hargrove
State Representative



I REALLY DO WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

I'd like to re-emphasize that as your representative in a government of the people, by the people and for the people, I hope you can see that many of my legislative efforts have been the direct result of input from you, my constituents. My efforts have focused on a wide variety of topics because they are the ideas you have presented to me. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any concerns or ideas you have to improve our state.

Highlights from the state operating budget



For the first time in years, legislators entered the 2014 session without a significant budget shortfall. This was due in no small part to the bipartisan 2013-15 state operating budget which did a much better job of prioritizing state spending, particularly as it relates to K-12 education. The formation of the Senate Majority Coalition resulted in all four caucuses being involved in much more bipartisan negotiations. The result was a budget that passed with the largest margin anyone can remember.

The two-year budget increased K-12 education funding to \$15.3 billion, up from \$13.6 billion, a substantial increase that for the past several years had only received lip service. In a significant step for our middle-class students, the budget also froze state college tuition for the first time in nearly 30 years. It also supported critical services for our most vulnerable – all without raising taxes.

The supplemental budget, which we passed this year, made minor spending adjustments. Again this year, we put the lion's share of new dollars toward K-12 education, but we also added funding for mental health services and continued the freeze on college tuition.

Ensuring we manage tax dollars wisely and prioritize spending like we do in our home budget is critical to creating budgets that are sustainable over the long-term. And, it is one way to rebuild your trust in government. The budget wasn't perfect, but when all sides get together and find a compromise that is workable, it's a good thing for the citizens of Washington and something I was pleased to support.

Transportation budget, reforms and accountability

The 2013-15 state transportation budget appropriated \$8.8 billion. More than \$2.6 billion of the spending is dedicated to megaprojects, like the 520 Bridge. This year's supplemental transportation budget provides an additional \$453 million, which included an additional \$170 million for the 520 Bridge project to cover cost overruns incurred due to a myriad of costly design errors.

There was also talk about a transportation tax package that could have raised upwards of \$10 billion for new and existing transportation infrastructure through a new 10-cent, or more, gas tax and other fee increases. I did not support this effort because I believe critical reforms are needed before asking you for more of your paycheck.

I introduced and supported several reform measures to address cost-drivers in the transportation system, including:

- **House Bill 1989**, which I sponsored, would have reduced the state bonding timeline for transportation projects from 30 years to 15 years. It received a public hearing but died in the House.
- **House Bill 1978** would have created more certainty in the project permitting process – getting costly road projects started sooner would create savings as costs rise over time. After much debate, this bill died in the House.

Another measure I introduced, **House Bill 1877**, would have heeded a state auditor recommendation to improve citizen oversight of Sound Transit. It would have required the election of Sound Transit board members in five representative districts. Sound Transit is the largest transit agency in the state and collects an excessive amount of tax dollars. It stands to reason voters should have a say in their board representation to ensure greater local accountability. This bill died in the House.



Mark testifying before the House Transportation Committee on his reform measures.

Innovation in K-12 education



My goal has always been to find creative solutions that better our state's K-12 education system in ways that improve student outcomes and support teachers, parents and administrators. To this end, I have focused much of my efforts on education-centered legislation.

House Bill 1546, my Innovation Schools measure, created a framework for change to allow educators, parents and communities more freedom to restructure school operations to enhance student achievement and close the achievement gap in the arts, science, technology, engineering and math. This bill was signed into law and is just one step toward what voters supported when they passed the charter schools initiative.

House Bill 1304, brought to me by Renton Christian School, creates parity between public and private K-12 schools to offer online coursework. While my House bill died, I managed to work with the Senate to get the identical bill (**Senate Bill 5496**) through. Its passage allows private online schools, which were not previously authorized in Washington state.

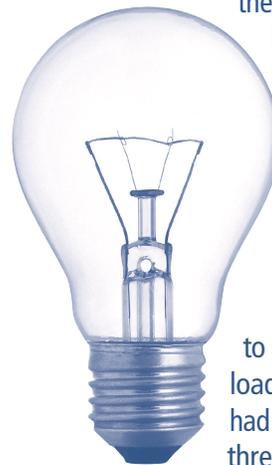
House Bill 2797, which I cosponsored, would allow for bonding of up to \$700 million in state lottery proceeds for school construction. As we work toward fully funding K-12 education, including K-3 class-size reductions, we must begin building schools that accommodate the new classrooms needed to house students and additional teachers. This bill passed the House and died in the Senate.

These bipartisan efforts prove that when we focus on where we agree, we can find solutions that are best for students, parents and teachers.

Jobs and economy

The one sure way to have enough money to pay for K-12 education and other priorities of government is to put people back to work in the private sector.

One measure I sponsored to accomplish this goal is **House Bill 1672**. It would have raised the exemption on the business and occupation tax for small businesses. When businesses are just starting up, it is quite detrimental for them to have to pay taxes on their gross receipts, when they may have actually lost money that year.



Our state has one of the highest business closure rates in the nation, so we need to help these businesses as they are getting started. This bill died in the House.

House Bill 1855 was my effort to help electricians that work with load bank testing whose jobs they had been doing safely for years were threatened by new rule interpretations by the state Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). While this bill did not move in the House, it prompted a discussion with L&I that eventually worked out the issue and saved the electricians' jobs. I'm currently in the process of working with another constituent on an issue with L&I that I hope we can resolve without legislation as well.

We must be willing to put forward good ideas, even small steps, that lead our state toward being more business friendly to encourage job creation statewide.

Green technology legislation signed into law

House Bill 2569 is my legislation to encourage the use of new technology (like adding small generators on fire engines) as a way to reduce emissions and noise, and at the same time save fuel and money. It builds on the success of a pilot project that was very cost effective for local governments.

The legislation creates a self-funded loan account where local government agencies can apply for loans to implement this or other idle emissions reduction technology, and, from the resultant fuel savings, pay the loan back. The loan program will be overseen by the state Department of Ecology. Because this creative idea was signed into law, we will see reduced diesel emissions, reduced noise, fuel savings and even job creation and improved public safety, as the savings from these innovations are reinvested in additional first responders – all without additional cost to us, the taxpayers!