

STAY CONNECTED!

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If you would like to sign up for my e-newsletter visit my Web page and go to the "sign up for my periodic e-mail updates" at the top of the page. You can also send me your e-mail information.

Committees:

- Appropriations
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services (Ranking Republican)
- Health Care and Wellness (Assistant Ranking Republican)
- Environment



Representative Harris on the floor of the House.

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE PAUL HARRIS
17th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
 PO Box 40600
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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
PAUL HARRIS

17th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It has been my privilege to serve a second term for the 17th District in the Washington State Legislature. We made progress in showing fiscal responsibility, passing legislation to provide more transparency and oversight of state agencies, and increased funding to education, but we need to do better in other areas. Washington's economy outside the I-5 corridor remains sluggish.

I hope you find this report on the 2014 Legislature informative and helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns or comments you have about this report.

I look forward to seeing you in the 17th District. It is an honor and privilege to serve you.

Sincerely,

Paul Harris
 17th District State Representative
 House Republican Whip

BIPARTISAN BUDGET

I supported the supplemental operating budget the Legislature passed. It is called “supplemental” because it makes only minor changes to the larger, biennial budget we passed last year. The reasons I supported the spending plan include:

- We put more money into K-12 education to help our local schools;
- Public college tuition rates remain frozen for students;
- Of the \$155 million in new spending, nearly two-thirds are directed toward education funding;
- It increases the state’s ending-fund balance to \$315 million, up from \$56 million in the two-year budget passed last year;
- The Legislature’s business was completed on time without the need for a special session; and
- Maybe, the most important point, no new tax increases were included.

House Democrats had proposed to increase taxes on bottled water, recycled fuel, prescription drugs, e-cigarettes, and eliminate the sales tax exemption for out-of-state shoppers, but we were able to stop those proposals.



EDUCATION – additional funding and a missed opportunity

Along with additional funding for education, the Legislature passed a bipartisan measure that will redirect a \$97 million appropriation for increased instructional hours to support implementation of a new 24-credit graduation requirement. This will be distributed to districts through an increase in materials, supplies and operation costs (MSOC) funding and a reduced class-size allocation for laboratory science in grades 9-12. **Senate Bill 6552** strengthens our high school graduation requirements, but also provides flexibility for our local districts.

A bill that would have simply made a minor adjustment to our state’s teacher and principal evaluation system did not make it through the Legislature. Its failure will likely result in the **loss of at least \$38 million in federal funding that would have helped some of our most disadvantaged students**. My concern is they will lose the teachers and programs that support them.

JOBS/ECONOMY – Let’s get ALL of Washington working

More still needs to be done to get people back to work. Last November, legislators were rushed back to Olympia for a whirlwind special session to vote on tax incentive legislation to keep Boeing jobs in the Puget Sound region and provide millions of dollars in infrastructure. I was supportive of this measure, with the hope we could do something to help our small employers and rural areas to create more job opportunities. We had legislation to:

- re-enact the Rural County Tax Incentive Program (that would have helped up to 31 counties);
- extend the tax incentive for data centers constructed in our state; and
- extend the same tax incentives Boeing received to rotorcraft (i.e. helicopters) because an Oregon-based company wanted to build helicopters in Southwest Washington.

None of this legislation was adopted. While we are holding our own in Clark County with the 8th lowest unemployment of all the counties at 7.6 percent, the surrounding counties have unemployment rates anywhere from 9.9 to 11.7 percent, while King County is at 5.6 percent. We need to address the growing discrepancy in the economy and employment rates between King County and the rest of the state.

AGENCY REFORMS – transparency and accountability

We were able to pass some legislation that will assist with agency actions and permitting. The measures will make state agencies accountable for their actions and their decision-making process more transparent.

- **House Bill 2192** will promote economic development by improving the predictability and efficiency of state agency permit decisions. This legislation is a good transparency measure making information about permitting assistance and timelines more readily available to the public.

- **House Bills 2261** and **2262** require the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Ecology to “show their work” by categorizing on their websites the sources of scientific information relied upon in support of significant agency actions.

HEALTH CARE

House Democrats passed legislation to expand provisions related to Obamacare. This is concerning given all of the problems we have seen at the federal level and delays implemented by the president. Luckily, the legislation did not pass the Senate. We should be looking at legislation to do the opposite, address some of the problems with Obamacare, rather than expanding it. House Republicans did introduce two bills, **House Bill 2220** and **2221**, that would have allowed Washington residents to buy catastrophic health care plans in other states and would have instructed the Office of the Insurance Commissioner to enter into compacts with other states to facilitate the purchase of out-of-state health care plans. These would have provided more options and increased competition in the health plan market. Neither bill received a public hearing.

Dextromethorphan bill signed into law

Earlier this year, constituents brought to my attention the fact that minors are misusing Dextromethorphan – a substance used in cough suppressants that relieves symptoms of the common cold and flu. It can be found in 140 different over-the-counter medications. I was alarmed to find out that young people in our district are consuming products like Nyquil and Theraflu in large dosages to get a euphoric high. I would like to thank the students at Evergreen High School, as well as their teacher, Patti McMaster, for shedding light on this new trend. I introduced **House Bill 2163** and the governor has signed it into law. This measure imposes a class 1 civil infraction on retail employees who sell products that contain Dextromethorphan (DM) to minors. Similar legislation has been passed in five other states, and I am proud to say that our students and teachers have added Washington state to that list.

