

Representative

Norm Johnson

14TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

2016 Legislative Review

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 60-day regular session came to an end on March 10. It took another 20 days of a special session before lawmakers reached an agreement on a supplemental operating budget that prioritized emergencies and court mandates, as well as provided additional funding for K-12 education – all without general tax increases.

We saved public charter schools. We also lowered college and university tuition – a first for any state in the nation.

The 14th District is the beneficiary of some remarkable investments in transportation. Plus, our capital construction budget is funding improvements at the Maryhill Museum and the Veterans Center in Toppenish.

We passed a bill I sponsored that allows the Bickleton School District to keep its four-day school week with extended daytime hours. We included a requirement for near-vision screening in all schools to help detect vision problems in thousands of children. Plus, the Legislature approved my measure, House Bill 2772, to allow certain public hospital districts to save taxpayers' money by participating in job-order contracting when repairing and renovating facilities.

This newsletter provides information on these and many other accomplishments the past two years in your Legislature. I am honored to serve you and the citizens of the 14th Legislative District. Please contact my office in Yakima any time you have questions, comments or suggestions about the Legislature and state government.

Sincerely,



Rep. Norm Johnson

14th DISTRICT OFFICE:

421 N. 20th Avenue, Suite A
Yakima, WA 98902

Phone: (509) 454-7210

EMAIL:

Norm.Johnson@leg.wa.gov

TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE

HOTLINE: 1-800-562-6000

WEBSITE:

RepresentativeNormJohnson.com

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES:

- General Government and Information Technology
- Health Care and Wellness



Budget increases education funding

Last June, the Legislature adopted a bipartisan \$38.2 billion 2015-17 state operating budget that increased funding to K-12 education by nearly \$3 billion – a 19 percent increase. K-12 education now receives as much as 48 percent of the state budget – the largest amount in state history.

We reinstated teacher cost-of-living adjustments and provided a one-time salary increase for teachers. We also made major investments in early learning and reduced K-3 class sizes. Plus, we reduced tuition at Washington's colleges and universities.

This year, we passed a supplemental operating budget that adds another \$15 million for K-12, including \$5 million to recruit and retain K-12 staff and support for beginning teachers. About \$41 million was added for mental health programs. There's an additional \$31 million for long-term care services and assistance for developmentally disabled. The agreement also uses \$190 million from the state's rainy day fund to pay for wildfire suppression last year.

While I share the frustration that it took three special sessions last year to come to agreement on a state operating budget and one this year to reach agreement on a supplemental operating budget, the savings to taxpayers was immense. Last year, Democrats wanted to raise taxes by \$1.5 billion and this year by \$119 million. Republicans stood firm and said "no" both times, and then negotiated budgets that increased education funding, prioritized spending, avoided major tax increases, and forced state government to live within its means.



As a former school teacher and administrator, Rep. Norm Johnson enjoys when young people come to visit the state Capitol.

What's next with *McCleary*?

The first measure signed by the governor this year, Senate Bill 6195, requires legislative action by the end of the 2017 session to eliminate our dependency on local school levies for basic education. The measure establishes an education funding task force to research the finances of each of the 295 school districts and their dependence on local levies to fund basic education. The task force will then make recommendations on the funding formula for the future. This hopefully will lead to completion of *McCleary* requirements by the 2018 deadline.



Public charter schools saved

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 6194, saving public charter schools in Washington after a state Supreme Court decision last fall put their continuation in danger. Funding for these schools will be through the Opportunity Pathways account – a constitutionally unrestricted funding source of lottery revenue. This will help to provide certainty to parents, students and teachers at the state's eight charter schools.

Transportation – Connecting Washington

Thanks to the tireless work of Sen. Curtis King, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, the Legislature approved a 16-year, \$16 billion transportation revenue package last year that pays for important highway and bridge projects across the state. The package includes funding for a new road from the Moxee/Terrace Heights area to Yakima, expansion of ramps on Interstate 82, and a new overpass in the Bingen area.

A green-tinted photograph of a diamond-shaped road construction sign that reads "ROAD CONSTRUCTION AHEAD". The sign is positioned in the foreground, with a road and some construction equipment visible in the background. The overall image has a soft, hazy quality.



Dr. Ben Winters of Yakima testifies in favor of a vision screening bill under consideration by the House Education Committee.

Vision screening bill becomes law

“One in four children has a vision problem that’s impacting their school performance,” Dr. Ben Winters told the House Education Committee during a work session March 2.

Dr. Winters is a developmental optometrist at the Washington Vision Therapy Center in Yakima. I asked him to come to Olympia to testify on House Bill 1865. Senate Bill 6245 was a similar measure eventually signed into law. The bill not only requires distance testing, but also near-vision screening for students in every school district.



Vision deficits account for illiteracy in 25 percent of students. A near-vision screening test of students in early grades will help catch these problems so that we can reduce illiteracy of Washington’s children.

Johnson bill ensures Bickleton can keep four-day school week

I’m very pleased the Legislature approved House Bill 2476, a measure I sponsored that allows the Bickleton School District to retain a four-day school week. The measure lets the state’s Board of Education continue granting waivers to smaller school districts not meeting the 180-day minimum school year requirement.

The Bickleton School District in Klickitat County is larger geographically than some states. It can often take much of the day for buses to travel outside the district to go to other

Local teens serve as legislative pages

I was honored this year to sponsor six young people from the 14th District as legislative pages. They included: Dane Hyatt and Kyler Tripp, both students at Naches Valley High School; Jackson Jamieson, a student at Selah Middle School; Kelly Martin from A.C. Davis High School in Yakima; Grant Pickett from West Valley Junior High School in Yakima; and Paul Moneymaker, who attends Zillah High School. My thanks to each of these young, bright stars for their service this year in the Legislature! For more information about the Page Program, go to: <http://leg.wa.gov/House/Pages/HousePageProgram.aspx>



Dane Hyatt



Kyler Tripp



Jackson Jamieson



Kelly Martin



Grant Pickett



Paul Moneymaker

schools for activities, such as sports. In 2009, the district sought from the Legislature, and was granted, the ability to have a waiver from the 180-day requirement. That change allowed them to go to a four-day school week with extended hours, and then use Fridays for travel to sports games and other extracurricular activities. However, it was set to expire Aug. 31, 2017. My bill continues that authorization indefinitely.

Representative

Norm Johnson

14TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

2016 Legislative Review

421 N. 20th Avenue • Yakima, WA 98902

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

REPRESENTATIVE NORM JOHNSON • 14TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

District office is open in Yakima

I work for you throughout the year, not just when the Legislature is in session. For your convenience, I maintain a district office in Yakima from now through December. I encourage you to call or visit my office any time you need assistance with state government or have questions regarding legislation. Here is the address and phone number:

**421 N. 20th Avenue, Suite A
Yakima, WA 98902**

Phone: (509) 454-7210

I also invite you to visit my website for more information:

RepresentativeNormJohnson.com

