

# 5TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Summer 2015



**Representative**

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**Committees:**

- Education (Ranking Republican)
- Appropriations
- Technology & Economic Development



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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After 176 days in a regular session and three special sessions, the Legislature adjourned July 10.

We share the frustration of many that the Legislature went into so many overtimes. However, in the end, those additional days saved taxpayers from nearly \$1.5 billion in new taxes and provided one of the best bipartisan education budgets in more than 30 years.

In this newsletter, we provide a brief overview of the session highlights and issues most important to the 5th District.

We made some landmark breakthroughs not only with education and an historic reduction of student tuition, but also with mental health policies and services.

More than 300 bills passed the Legislature to become law and to benefit Washingtonians. We invite you to read more inside this newsletter.

Although the Legislature has adjourned, please remember we work for you throughout the year. If you have questions, comments or suggestions about the materials in this update, or any other items relating to legislation and state government, please reach out to our offices.

Thank you for the honor of allowing us to serve you!

Sincerely,

Rep. Chad Magendanz

Rep. Jay Rodne

## The Operating Budget

### Taxpayers saved from \$1.5 billion in tax increases

Gov. Jay Inslee and the majority party in the House had hoped to increase your taxes by more than \$1.5 billion. First the governor proposed a carbon tax, which didn't have the support of his party. Then Democrats proposed a combination of business taxes and a new capital gains income tax, but they never brought those proposals to the floor for a vote.

Republicans in the House and Senate knew we didn't need tax increases to invest more in education and balance the budget. That's because an improving economy in Puget Sound boosted existing revenues by more than \$3 billion.

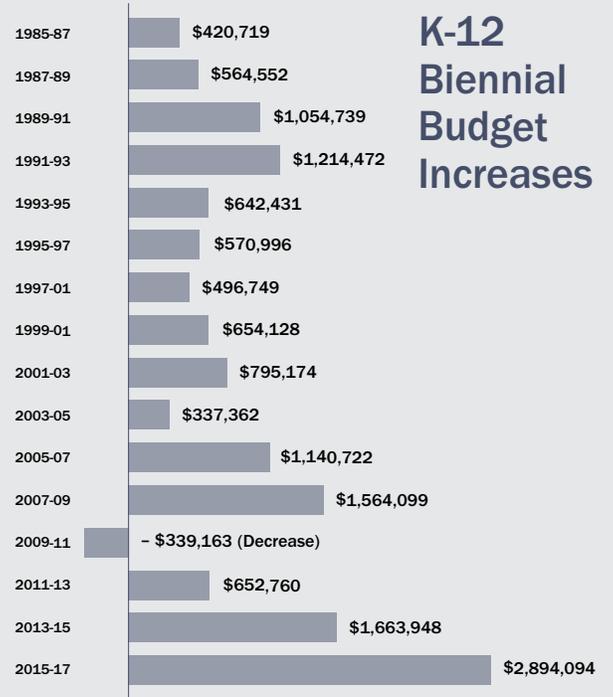
Our budget negotiators held firm that major tax increases were unnecessary and would not be a part of the final budget. When the May revenue forecast showed the state would be taking in even more money, Democrats slowly began removing their tax increase proposals. In the end, we closed some small tax loopholes, but saved taxpayers from \$1.5 billion in tax increases. That's money that can be invested back into our state's economy. The final \$38 billion operating budget agreement had the strongest bipartisan support of any budget in the past 26 years.

## K-12 Education

### Historic achievements in the operating budget

Here's a quick look at new education funding in the budget:

- Invests an additional \$2.9 billion in K-12 education, a 19 percent increase;
- 48 percent of the state budget is now directed for K-12 education – the largest amount in more than 30 years;
- Voter-approved teacher cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) have been reinstated;
- Includes an additional \$152 million increase for a one-time salary raise in addition to the teacher COLAs;
- Makes a major investment in early learning, including Early Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program;
- Provides \$180 million to expand all-day kindergarten and \$350 million to reduce class sizes in grades K-3, where research shows it does the most good; and
- \$200 million was also provided in the capital budget for classroom construction.



## Other budget highlights

### College tuition reduced, mental health services improved

Here are other highlights of the new operating budget:

- Cuts tuition: 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;
- \$41 million to the Opportunity Scholarship Program (matched with private donations);
- \$2.5 million for the Washington State University Medical School;
- \$39 million for increased mental health civil bed capacity and \$39 million for increased forensic capacity;
- \$3.5 million for a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team at Western State Hospital;
- \$88.3 million in increased funding for in-home care providers for the disabled;
- Fully funds state employee collective bargaining agreements, which generally include a 3 percent raise in fiscal year 2016 and a 1.8 percent raise in fiscal year 2017;
- \$20.4 million for increased operations and maintenance of State Parks; and
- Increases property tax relief income thresholds for senior citizens and those with disabilities by \$5,000.

Representative

## Chad Magendanz



### Session successes

I am pleased to report several session successes, especially with regard to legislation I sponsored and co-sponsored.

### Expanding computer science education

House Bill 1813, a bipartisan measure I co-sponsored with Rep. Drew Hansen, D-Bainbridge Island, was signed into law and will expand computer science education in our state. The bill adopts high-quality statewide computer teaching standards, and expands scholarship eligibility for educators interested in computer science. It will help students prepare for a growing demand of workers in the computer science field.

### Incentives for more EV charging stations

Technology has given us the ability to drive longer distances in electric vehicles (EVs). They are a quieter drive, emit fewer pollutants than gasoline engines, and are rapidly becoming very cost efficient. Washington has the lowest electrical rates in the nation and 93 percent of our electricity production is zero-emission sourced. Because of these reasons, EVs are attracting more buyers. Unfortunately, many EV owners still don't have access to a charger at home or work.

This year, I introduced House Bill 1853, which offers financial incentives for utilities to build EV charging stations. Under the program, customers could ask their participating utilities to provide an EV charging station on their property, just like they'd request a cable modem installation from the cable company. Because there's no up-front cost to the ratepayer, many of the obstacles to having an EV charging station at home or work would disappear.

I'm pleased the measure passed the Legislature and was signed into law.

*Rep. Chad Magendanz continued on back page*

Representative

## Jay Rodne



### 2015 Legislature ends on high note with good investments

I was disappointed it took us into triple overtime to resolve our budget differences, but the long list of successes we had this session prove there is no longer one-party control in Olympia. I'm looking forward to the work ahead.

### Mental health system improvements

On top of the operating budget investment of more than \$75 million in mental health to address recent court cases, including the Trueblood litigation, the Legislature passed several mental-health system upgrades into law. One of these is Joel's Law, which allows the family of mentally-ill individuals who pose a serious threat to themselves or others to petition the courts for involuntary commitment. You may remember the story of Joel Reuter who, in the summer of 2013, was shot and killed by police after experiencing a severe bipolar disorder episode and threatening the police and public around him. Joel's parents, Nancy and Doug Reuter, have worked tirelessly with myself and other lawmakers to bring this law to fruition and to ensure others receive the proper treatment they desperately need.

In addition, a bill I sponsored to maintain mental health inpatient safety was signed into law. House Bill 1599 allows the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to order the transfer of violent mental health inpatients to secure Department of Correction's facilities. DSHS has only used their authority to do this once since 2010.

These bills are important steps forward in fixing our broken mental health system.

*Rep. Jay Rodne continued on back page*

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# Chad Magendanz *continued from page 3*

## Supreme Court sanctions

As this newsletter was going to print, the state Supreme Court announced it is imposing sanctions against the state of \$100,000 a day, despite the Legislature making historic investments in K-12 education during the 2015 session. The fines would be directed to basic education.

Part of the court's concern is that schools are relying too heavily on local property tax levies for a gap in salaries and other funding not provided by the state. We knew when the Legislature finally adjourned last month that levy reform still needed to be addressed. But we felt it could best be done during the 2016 session, giving lawmakers time to come up with workable levy reform legislation. Legislative leaders have decided to let the fines accrue while a bipartisan team works on solutions to the Supreme Court's concerns, including levy reform. I will be serving on that team. Those solutions could be adopted either during a fourth special session, or more likely when lawmakers return for the 2016 session in January.

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### The work ahead

The Legislature also suspended the class-size reduction initiative (1-1351) for four years because the price tag is nearly \$2 billion per year, which is just not affordable. We need to get an early start on finding solutions to the class-size issue, which is one of the primary concerns remaining among educators and parents in our state.

I will also continue the work I began through House Bill 1854 to reform teacher pay, reward highly effective teachers, and attract the most qualified teachers where they're needed the most, particularly in areas chronically hard to staff, such as special education and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).



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# Jay Rodne *continued from page 3*

## Transportation investment package signed into law

In the final days of the session, the Legislature passed a transportation investment package. Like the other three caucuses, we had people who voted for and against the package – I voted 'yes' and Rep. Magendanz voted 'no.'

Those who voted in favor of the package did so because it funds important projects in their districts as well as enacts several accountability reforms for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), including encouraging the WSDOT to use design-build on projects more than \$2 million and adding congestion relief and freight mobility to their transportation goals. These reforms are a step in the right direction.

Those who voted against the package did so because of the incre-

### Projects affecting our district

- SR 18/I-90 interchange corridor project
- I-90/Front Street interchange
- I-90 thru Snoqualmie Pass corridor improvements
- I-405 corridor widening between Renton and Lynnwood
- I-90 shoulder restriping between Issaquah and Eastgate
- And other projects in surrounding areas.



mental 12-cent tax increase, the emergency clause that suppressed a vote of the people on the November ballot, and insufficient reforms to address project blunders under WSDOT's watch.

Bottom line: we must continue to push for stronger reforms to ensure gas-tax dollars are maximized. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I look forward to working with my colleagues on more cost-saving reforms.