

Matt Manweller



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2014 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

My first term representing you in the 13th Legislative District has been a rewarding and eye-opening experience. The last two years have been successful from the standpoint we have stopped major tax increases, and passed a number of bills important to the district and region. However, I am concerned about the direction of our statewide economy and health care. More on those issues in this update, along with my budget vote.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns or comments you have about this report.

Sincerely,

Matt Manweller

SUPPLEMENTAL OPERATING BUDGET

As with most budgets there is good and bad. The supplemental state operating budget passed by the Legislature does not raise taxes. It adds \$58 million for K-12 education materials, supplies, and operating costs, continuing our education investment. It increases funding for the higher education Opportunity Scholarship for students in science, technology, engineering, and math fields. It funds programs for mental health and people with developmental disabilities and the ending fund balance is much higher than the last budget.

However, I opposed the budget because of what it did not do. 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. During the debate I reminded all legislators that in the 2014 session we could also help the little guys, the small employers in rural Washington who continue to struggle in this sluggish economy. Bills or proposals to improve job creation and strengthen our economy included:

- ▶ **House Bill 2204**, which I prime-sponsored to reestablish the Rural County Sales and Use Tax Deferral Program – a program that proved very successful from 1994 to 2009. The bill received a public hearing but died in the House Finance Committee. It would have helped up to 31 counties;
- ▶ **Senate Bill 6550** would have extended the tax incentive legislation for data centers constructed in our state; and
- ▶ attempts to restore funding to the Public Works Trust Fund in the budget failed after the fund was swept in the previous budget. This is one of the few mechanisms to provide economic development for smaller, depressed counties and the main driver for projects in Eastern Washington.

There continues to be talk about “one Washington” but that doesn’t seem to extend outside the I-5 corridor. There seems to be a “one Washington” and a “forgotten Washington” and for that reason I did not support the budget.

We need to promote job creation everywhere. Policies need to create prosperity on both sides of the mountains, large and small, and urban and rural. I would also point to the latest unemployment numbers. King County has the lowest rate at 5.2 percent while the counties in the 13th District look like this:

- **Kittitas:** 9.2 percent
- **Grant:** 11.5 percent
- **Douglas:** 9.0 percent
- **Lincoln:** 9.0 percent

LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW

We were successful in getting a number of bills I sponsored or co-sponsored through the legislative process and signed into law by the governor, many directly impacting the 13th District.

House Bill 1068 exempts television owners who subscribe to satellite television service from paying the excise tax imposed by the Kittitas County TV Reception Improvement District. This law went into effect last year.

House Bill 2253 clarifies the scope of work for those in the telecommunications industry and saved about 4,000 jobs. The legislation simply clarifies what telecommunications companies have been doing for 20 years and continues to allow people who install telephones and Internet cables to continue to do so after an adverse ruling by the Department of Labor and Industries threatened their jobs.

LEGISLATION WRAP-UP (CONTINUED)

House Bill 2255 will allow farmers to access different sections of their fields along the Milwaukee Road Corridor. My legislation simply gets rid of the arcane statutes and lets the Parks and Recreation Commission manage the Milwaukee Trail as it does all rail trails under its jurisdiction.

House Bill 1417 will help improve the flow of water by making some technical fixes to irrigation district law, including administration, public hearings, reviewing delinquent assessments and authorizing hydroelectric generation facilities in certain circumstances.

House Bill 1254 prohibits the Department of Labor and Industries from collecting an affidavit certification fee from individuals or entities that are exempt from the requirement to pay prevailing wage, eliminating some paperwork redundancy and a fee being collected by the department.

House Bill 2547 gives Kittitas County the option to create a less than county-wide port district, if voters approve the proposal before Dec. 31, 2020.

House Bill 1634 will allow solar, geothermal and biomass energy facilities to be treated the same as wind power facilities for taxing purposes. This will generate additional revenue for school buildings and other public projects without shifting any burden to homeowners.



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2014 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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SMALL BUSINESSES UNDER FIRE

The success of our small employers is essential to our economic growth, especially in our rural areas. Unfortunately, House Democrats introduced legislation that would have been detrimental to all business, large and small. We were able to stop most of this legislation, but it is reason for concern. There were proposals to:

- increase the minimum wage;
- require mandatory paid sick and safe leave;
- require mandatory paid vacation leave; and
- add or expand provisions related to Obamacare.

I introduced two bills, **House Bill 2220** and **2221**, to do the opposite – address some of the problems with Obamacare. The bills would have allowed Washington residents to buy catastrophic health care plans in other states and would instruct the Office of the Insurance Commissioner to enter into compacts with other states to facilitate the purchase of out-of-state health insurance plans. Neither bill received a public hearing.

