

# 16TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Spring 2016



**Representative**

## Maureen Walsh

16th Legislative District  
Position 1

**Website:**

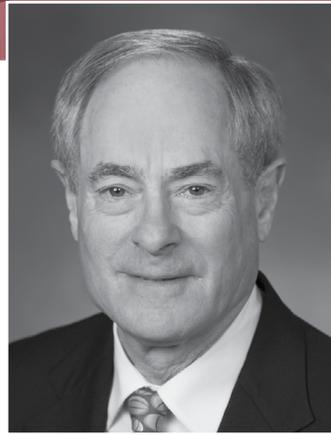
[RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com](http://RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com)

**Email:**

[Maureen.Walsh@leg.wa.gov](mailto:Maureen.Walsh@leg.wa.gov)

**Committees:**

- Early Learning and Human Services (Ranking Republican)
- Capital Budget



**Representative**

## Terry Nealey

16th Legislative District  
Position 2

**Website:**

[RepresentativeTerryNealey.com](http://RepresentativeTerryNealey.com)

**Email:**

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**Committees:**

- Finance (Ranking Republican)
- Technology and Economic Development
- Economic and Revenue Forecast Council

**District office:** (April - December)

26 East Main, Suite #8  
Walla Walla, WA 99362

**Rep. Walsh:** (509) 527-4151

**Rep. Nealey:** (509) 526-6284



Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TTY: 1-800-635-9993

Legislative information  
on the Internet:

[leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The 2016 legislative session ended March 29. Though it took 20 days longer than it should have, lawmakers adjourned with a supplemental budget that prioritized emergencies and court mandates, as well as provided additional funds for K-12 education and public charter schools. The budget passed was not perfect, but it was a compromise that did not include the House Democrats' proposed \$120 million in new taxes.

Along with the Republican majority in the Senate, we held the line on new tax increases. We did have to tap into the Budget Stabilization Account (BSA), our state's rainy day fund, for wildfire recovery after last year's devastating wildfires. The BSA still has a sufficient balance should our state face another economic downturn. It is important we continue to exercise restraint and prioritize sustainability when it comes to our budget decisions in Olympia.

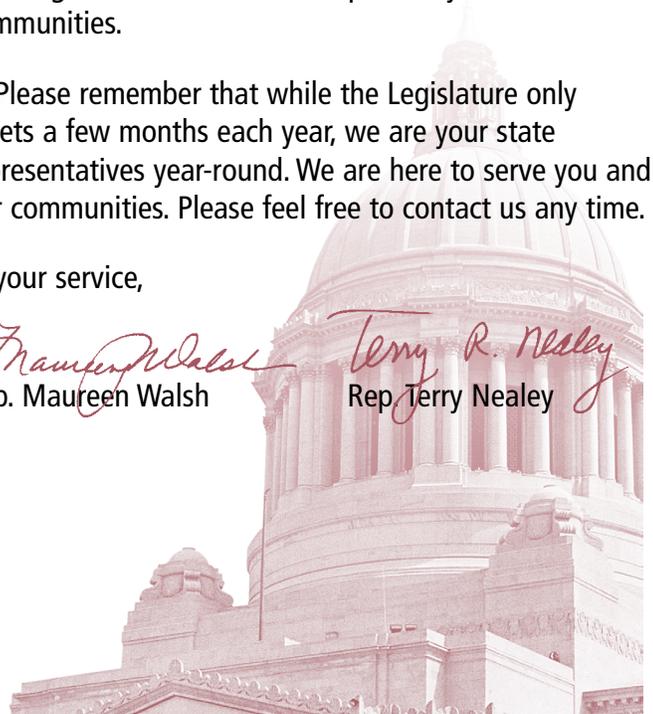
There's already a long to-do list we must accomplish when the Legislature convenes in 2017, but for the time being we are happy to be back home in southeast Washington. It is an honor to represent you and our communities.

Please remember that while the Legislature only meets a few months each year, we are your state representatives year-round. We are here to serve you and our communities. Please feel free to contact us any time.

In your service,

  
Rep. Maureen Walsh

  
Rep. Terry Nealey



## Education remains paramount in state budget

Last year in June, we adopted a \$38.2 billion 2015-17 state operating budget that increased funding to K-12 education by nearly \$3 billion this biennium – a 19 percent increase. As much as 48 percent of the state budget is now directed for K-12 education – the largest amount in state history.

Voter-approved teacher cost-of-living adjustments were reinstated, as well as a one-time salary increase for teachers. We also made major investments in early learning and reduced K-3 class sizes. We reduced tuition by 15 percent at the University of Washington and Washington State University, 20 percent at regional universities, and 5 percent at community and technical colleges. This is remarkable, given that no other state has reduced tuition.

**This year** on March 29, 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. An additional \$16 million was provided for early learning and child care. About \$41 million was added for mental-health programs. There's an additional \$31 million for long-term care services and assistance for individuals with developmental disabilities. The agreement also uses \$190 million from the rainy day fund to pay for wildfire suppression last year.

## What's next with the *McCleary* decision?

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 should lead to completion of *McCleary* requirements.

## Saving public charter schools

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. This will help to provide certainty to parents, students and teachers at the state's eight charter schools, including Willow School in Walla Walla, which anticipates opening in August 2017.

## Nealey's tax fairness bills become law

Two tax reform bills authored by **Rep. Nealey** passed the Legislature and were recently signed into law.

**House Bill 2539** will ensure surviving heirs are no longer charged a real estate excise tax on their inherited property.

**House Bill 2540** will reduce the excessive 100 percent penalty against those who make a mistake on their tax form when reporting tax preferences they have received from the state.

Get more details about these bills from **Rep. Nealey's** website: [RepresentativeTerryNealey.com](http://RepresentativeTerryNealey.com).



*Sen. Mike Hewitt and Rep. Terry Nealey with the Walla Walla Frontier Days Princess Katie Woodhall, Queen Josilyn Fullerton, and Princess Natalia Maiuri. Reps. Nealey and Walsh introduced House Resolution 4679 honoring the Walla Walla Frontier Days sesquicentennial this year.*

*Rep. Nealey also authored House Resolution 4680, paying tribute to the Prosser High School football team, winner of the 2015 Class 2A state championship and five previous championships.*



## Preventing abuse of state's Public Records Act

Abuses of the state's Public Records Act have increased substantially. Some are gaming the system with "fishing expeditions" or retaliation requests, making money from fines levied by the courts against state and local governments that were unable to timely fulfill those requests. **Rep. Nealey** worked this session to address these concerns:

- **Body cameras for law enforcement – House Bill 2362:** Passed by the Legislature, **Rep. Nealey** co-sponsored this bill which limits broad requests for police body-camera videos while keeping key footage available to the public. The measure sets rules on what body-camera footage is presumed to be private under the Public Records Act, sets up a task force to examine best practices for their use, and encourages police agencies that plan to use the cameras to adopt policies related to their use.
- **Public Records Act reforms – House Bill 2576:** Co-sponsored by **Rep. Nealey**, the bill would have allowed agencies to set policies of response prioritization, based on emergencies, complexity and size of the requests. Under certain limited and strict conditions, agencies would have been able to deny a massive request for all or substantially all agency records. While the bill did not pass, **Rep. Nealey** plans to continue working on this issue with stakeholders to prevent abuses while preserving government transparency.

## Helping our most vulnerable citizens

Legislation sponsored this session by **Rep. Walsh** to empower families and individuals with developmental disabilities was recently signed into law. **House Bill 2394** expands the national Parent to Parent program to all 39 Washington counties. The program matches parents with volunteer parents who also have children with similar special needs in order to help new parents navigate the variety of services available. The program has been successful in 31 of Washington's 39 counties, and is a small but important investment in assisting families who have a child with a disability feel less isolated and better informed as they seek resources and services in their communities.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which **Rep. Walsh** co-sponsored, was also signed by the governor. The bill creates a tax-free savings and investment program for eligible individuals with disabilities. It's similar to a college savings program, and would allow families and individuals to invest more in their futures without threatening their disability benefits. The legislation builds from Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers' federal ABLE Act legislation passed last year.

More information on these bills can be found on **Rep. Walsh's** website: [RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com](http://RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com).



## Empowering working families

State assistance to those in need should seek to empower, not enable. Assisting families on welfare with an educational opportunity to help them find a job and care for their family without federal or state assistance is a good use of public assistance dollars.

Last year, **Rep. Walsh** sponsored legislation to increase the vocational education allowance timeframe to 24 months under the WorkFirst program, our state's welfare program. It is difficult to connect a WorkFirst participant with a family-wage job with only one year of education. Expanding the time limit could allow more WorkFirst participants the ability to earn a two-year degree, such as an associate degree, a nursing degree, or a certificate in a program that will connect them to family-wage jobs and elevate them out of government assistance. She will continue to work to pass this legislation in the coming session.



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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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REPRESENTATIVE

**Maureen Walsh**

REPRESENTATIVE

**Terry Nealey**

26 East Main • Suite #8 • Walla Walla, WA 99362

## We want to hear from you

The best ideas in the Legislature often come from constituents. We truly have a citizen Legislature – a place where ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things. You can make a difference from our southeast corner of the state. Here are some ways to get involved in the legislative process and state government:

- Governor’s office** ..... [governor.wa.gov](http://governor.wa.gov)
- Legislature** ..... [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)
- State agencies** ..... [access.wa.gov/agency](http://access.wa.gov/agency)
- TVW** ..... [tvw.org](http://tvw.org)
- Bill information** ..... <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo>
- Civic education** ..... [leg.wa.gov/civiced](http://leg.wa.gov/civiced)
- Washington House Republicans** ..... [houserepublicans.wa.gov](http://houserepublicans.wa.gov)
- Rep. Terry Nealey** ..... [RepresentativeTerryNealey.com](http://RepresentativeTerryNealey.com)
- Rep. Maureen Walsh** ..... [RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com](http://RepresentativeMaureenWalsh.com)



*Sen. Mike Hewitt, Rep. Maureen Walsh and Rep. Terry Nealey at the state Capitol.*

### THANK YOU, SEN. MIKE HEWITT!

We have been privileged to work alongside Sen. Mike Hewitt as a part of the 16th District legislative team.

Since 2000, Sen. Hewitt has served our district well, including seven years as Senate Republican Leader. His longtime business experience brought common sense to many issues in the Legislature. His passion for veterans’ issues helped to secure funding for the Walla Walla Veterans’ Home. He’s been a strong supporter of citizens throughout the 16th District and the state.

After 16 years in the state Senate, Sen. Hewitt announced he’s retiring at the end of this year. We want to take this opportunity to publicly thank him for his service to our state and to wish him and his wife, Cory, well as they move into the next chapter of their lives.