



16TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

REPRESENTATIVE Maureen Walsh | REPRESENTATIVE Terry Nealey

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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.

If there is one takeaway we want to leave you with in this newsletter, it is that you can make a difference. In this age of technology, you don't have to spend a lot of time in Olympia to be influential. 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:

- Legislative Hotline . . . . . 1-800-562-6000
governor.wa.gov . . . . . (360) 902-4111 • Governor's office
leg.wa.gov . . . . . Legislature and visiting the Capitol Campus
access.wa.gov/agency . . . . State agencies, boards and commissions
tvw.org . . . . . TV Washington
apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo . . Bill information (you can post comments)
leg.wa.gov/civiced . . . . . Civic education for kids, college students and teachers



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

We are here to serve you, our communities

We are fortunate to have great legislative assistants who understand our district and how to help people. We are all here to serve you and our communities. Please always feel free to call, e-mail, send us a letter or set up a meeting with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Spring 2014



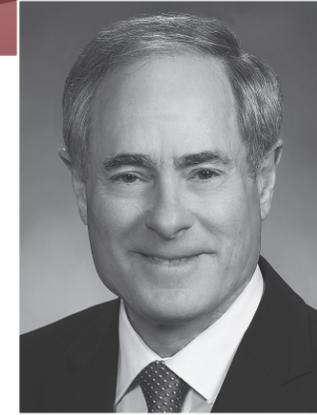
Representative Maureen Walsh

16th Legislative District Position 1

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- House committees: Early Learning and Human Services (Ranking Republican), Technology and Economic Development, Higher Education



Representative Terry Nealey

16th Legislative District Position 2

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E-mail: terry.nealey@leg.wa.gov

- House committees: Finance (Ranking Republican), Judiciary (Assistant Ranking Republican), Environment, Rules

District offices: (April - December)

26 East Main Suite 205 Walla Walla, WA 99362 Phone: (509) 526-6284

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Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000 TTY: 1-800-635-9993 Legislative information on the Internet: leg.wa.gov

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The 2014 legislative session ended on March 13. We are happy to report that the Legislature finished its work on time and a special session was not necessary. This outcome was the result of a fiscally-conservative majority of state lawmakers who understood the need to restrain and prioritize state spending.

State lawmakers passed 237 bills this year, including a bipartisan supplemental operating budget that prioritizes K-12 education, higher education and our most vulnerable Washingtonians. We both voted for this budget. The governor and other state lawmakers pushed for more than \$200 million in new tax increases, but we were able to stop them.

If there was unfinished business from this year, it was the Legislature's inability to advance solutions for economic growth. State lawmakers must do more to help those who are still out of work or underemployed.

We also face additional challenges next year meeting the McCleary decision's education funding requirements, addressing needed transportation infrastructure and reforms, and regulating marijuana sales in Washington.

While it is an honor to represent you and our communities in the Washington State House of Representatives, we are happy to be back home in southeast Washington. We missed our families, our homes and all of the things our beautiful part of the state has to offer.

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,

Maureen Walsh (signature)

Rep. Maureen Walsh

Terry R. Nealey (signature)

Rep. Terry Nealey

## State budget focuses on education, most vulnerable citizens

One of the primary responsibilities of state lawmakers is to pass an operating budget. This state spending plan pays for our K-12 education system, public colleges and universities, health and human services, our correctional system, other state agencies, and debt service.

In even-numbered years, such as 2014, the Legislature makes mid-course adjustments to the two-year operating budget that passed the previous year. This is called a

supplemental operating budget.

Fortunately, our economy is slowly improving – though not fast enough for many families. With this improvement comes modest revenue (tax collections) growth for our state. This, along with a requirement that the operating budget balance over four years, allowed state lawmakers to make some additional investments in the supplemental operating budget this year.

We voted for the supplemental operating budget because it prioritizes education – including more money for our K-12 education system and a continued freeze on tuition increases in our public colleges and universities. It funds a new 265-bed unit at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, creating local jobs. It also focuses on our most vulnerable citizens – including investments in long-term care, mental health and programs for people with developmental disabilities.

◀ *Walla Walla Community College President Dr. Steven VanAusdler with Rep. Terry Nealey. For a second year in a row, the Legislature provided additional funding for higher education and did not increase tuition rates.*



## K-12 education funding, reform and accountability

We understand the expectation of our state constitution, which says: “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex.”

The 2013-15 state operating budget spends nearly **\$15.3 billion** on K-12 education – up from **\$13.6 billion** in the previous budget cycle. This was a big step in the right direction for our schools, and we were proud to have supported this operating budget last year.

It is not just about putting more money in the system though – it is also about following through on education reforms and ensuring accountability in our schools. These three elements – funding, reforms and accountability – will lead to better outcomes for our students. This is the ultimate goal.

State lawmakers will need to continue to build on the bipartisan K-12 education work of the last two years when they arrive in Olympia in January 2015.

## No new taxes!

A lengthy list of proposed tax increases came through the House Finance Committee, where **Rep. Terry Nealey** serves as ranking Republican.

These proposals included increased taxes on bottled water, recycled fuel, prescription drugs, e-cigarettes, and the elimination of the sales tax exemption for out-of-state shoppers.

Proponents argued tax preferences, which they called “loopholes,” needed to be closed to bring more money into state coffers. We believe many of these tax preferences help with job creation. We should not sacrifice jobs in order to increase state spending. Fortunately, many like-minded state lawmakers agreed and the final supplemental operating budget agreement did not include tax increases.



## Preserving and creating local jobs

Too many of our friends and neighbors are still looking for a job or are underemployed. While our economy is slowly improving, it is of little comfort for many struggling families.

The Legislature must do more to improve the state’s business climate and encourage employers to grow and hire more people. Our state continues to have an expensive workers’ compensation system, a complicated permitting process and a growing maze of rules and regulations. We all want to protect injured workers, care about the environment and expect employers to be compliant with the law, but our state goes beyond what is needed to ensure these goals.

One bright spot this year was the passage of **House Bill 2192**. This bipartisan legislation will help economic development by enhancing the transparency and predictability of state agency permitting and review processes. There are more solutions on the table like this one and it is time we move them forward. If we can, our state can do more to accelerate its economic recovery and create jobs.



## Helping our most vulnerable citizens

We believe helping our most vulnerable citizens is a priority of state government.

**House Bill 2746**, which passed and was signed into law this year, will leverage federal funding to provide services for families of those with developmental disabilities who are currently on a waiting list in our state. We supported an amendment to this bill that would have increased pay (from federal funding) for caregivers who provide these services, but unfortunately the Democratic majority voted it down.

This is just one of many bills we have supported to help those most in need. We will continue to fight for people with developmental disabilities and those who care for them.



*Rep. Maureen Walsh with Jessica Swanson on the floor of the Washington State House of Representatives. Jessica, a student at Garrison Middle School, served as a legislative page during the 2014 legislative session.*

## Supporting the Walla Walla Veterans’ Home

**Senate Bill 5691**, prime sponsored by our seatmate **Sen. Mike Hewitt**, passed and was signed into law this year. This important legislation would establish the Walla Walla Veterans’ Home as a branch of the state soldiers’ home. This new facility, which is still contingent on federal funding, would create almost 100 permanent jobs and serve veterans in southeast Washington and parts of Oregon and Idaho.

We strongly supported this bill (**Rep. Terry Nealey** was the prime sponsor of the House version) because we understand and appreciate what this facility would mean to our local veterans, their families and our communities. We will continue to work with the federal government to ensure this project comes to fruition.