

State Representative John Ahern

ECONOMIC GROWTH

More than 10 percent of the people eligible to work in Spokane County are still seeking a job. Since before the 2011 special session began in December, I had two goals: balance the budget without raising taxes, and get Washington working again.

Here are the **proposals I supported to get Washington working again:**

1. Simplify and reduce the number of tax rates for small businesses – House Bill 2290.
2. Reduce barriers to permitting projects that would create jobs – House Bill 1961.
3. Recognize hydropower as renewable energy – House Bill 1125.
4. Reform government programs and services – House Bills 1779 and 1872.
5. Enact major regulatory reform – House Bill 2276.
6. Address excessive agency rulemaking – House Bills 1151, 1156, 1341 and 1671.
7. Suspend the Growth Management Act in counties and cities with high unemployment – House Bill 1592.
8. Make state unfunded mandates optional for local governments – House Bill 2834 passed the Legislature, and I voted “yes.”



You can find out more about these bills at
www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/current-issues/hrc-job-proposal-tracking



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2012 SESSION REVIEW

State Representative
John Ahern

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State Representative John Ahern

6th Legislative District

2012 SESSION REVIEW

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Legislature has finally adjourned for 2012. Because Democrats could not gain enough support for their budget, Republicans led the charge to pass a budget and reforms that will lead to greater fiscal stability. Unfortunately, this meant going into the fifth special session in two years. **I joined the call in November to complete the entire budget exercise in December** when we were called in for yet another special session.

Inside you will find a brief **review of the 2012 sessions** and an update on the budget, Discover Pass and economic growth. I hope it is informative and that you will feel free to contact my office with any questions.

You may have heard that **I am retiring and will not seek another term as your state representative**. While I'm looking forward to spending more quality time with my family, **it has been an honor to serve** the communities of the 6th District for 10 years. I thank you for sharing your questions, comments and opinions on issues that matter to you over the years.

I will continue to represent you through December this year. If you would like to meet with me, or invite me speak to your group, please contact my office. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,


John Ahern

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Visit my Web site:

www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/ahern

Read my press releases, watch a special video tour of the Capitol, sign up for my e-mail updates and more!

State Representative **John Ahern**

BUDGET & REFORMS

This year's supplemental budget was like none other. Since majority Democrats could not gain the support for their budget ideas in the regular session, Republicans led with winning ideas to reform government to put our state budget on a long-term sustainable path.



Sharing my thoughts on the House floor.

I was proud to support these important **reforms in state government**:

- Senate Bill 6378 will reduce **pension benefits** for new public employees who retire early. The state's pension system is among the biggest cost-drivers in state government; this reform is expected to save public employers and taxpayers approximately \$1.3 billion over the next 25 years.
- Senate Bill 5940 will improve transparency and options for **public-school teachers and classified staff in their health insurance**. Currently, these public servants are forced to purchase their health insurance from a single carrier, their school districts. This leads to unfair premiums for families and lack of choice.
- Senate Bill 6636 will require **budgets to balance over four years**. It requires that the current two-year budget cycle as well as the next budget cycle must balance before the current budget is adopted. Washington is the first state in the nation with this kind of law. It will force the Legislature to think about the budget in the long-term, not just the current year.

6th Legislative District

While the final budget does spend less than the previous biennium, I still had several major concerns. I voted "no" because:

- The adopted budget leaves **just \$319 million in reserves**. Last year, the budget had \$745 million in reserves — most of which was wiped out after just one bad revenue forecast! This budget hopes that the economy will rebound when things are still very unstable.
- It **fails to make difficult choices** about our current budget by ending large social entitlement programs we can no longer afford. These decisions would not be popular, but they would have been responsible.
- It counts on a **one-time accounting change** to the state's cash flow. Using one-time money for ongoing programs is part of the reason our state continues to have budget shortfalls.

In February, **I supported a balanced, sustainable budget** sponsored by House Republicans that would have funded education first and foremost, protected the most vulnerable, and protected public safety. Our budget proposal would have reduced government spending by \$817 million while leaving \$625 million in reserves, without any sales tax increase or budget gimmicks.

You can read more about the House Republican budget at:

www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/current-issues/hrc-budget



Chatting with Rep. Mike Hope, R-Lake Stevens, on the House floor.

2012 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

VOTE CORRECTIONS

I want to let you know about two votes I took this year which were recorded incorrectly. During the hectic pace and several late nights, it is easy to get distracted. With an electronic roll call machine, members in the House have less than 30 seconds to push the button corresponding to our vote. Unfortunately, I mis-voted on two bills (out of more than 700). I immediately had them corrected in the official journal of the House, but this won't display online correctly for a couple of months. So I want you to know how I intended to vote:



- Senate Bill 5895 would set up statewide teacher and principal evaluation systems. **I intended to vote "yes"** because I believe it's important we have the very best teachers to provide the very best opportunities for children.



- Senate Bill 6290 would allow the spouse of a service member being deployed to place their license with the Departments of Health or Licensing on inactive status. **I intended to vote "yes"** because it's an important way we can help take care of our military service members while they are deployed to serve our country.

DISCOVER PASS

The Legislature adopted and the governor signed into law changes to the Discover Pass, the new fee adopted last year to pay for parks. Though **I voted against the fee last year**, I heard from many of you who are concerned about how the fee was implemented. I had hoped this year we could make two simple fixes: to cap the total cost of the fee at \$30, and to allow parks users to transfer their passes from one vehicle to another.

House Bill 2373 does **allow the pass to be used on two vehicles, but it does not cap the cost**. In fact, the bill expands the unfair opt-out provision to four new vehicle categories. I believe most people want to support the parks, but they are tired of being nicked and dimed at every turn. I voted "no" on this legislation, and I'm afraid the Legislature will have to address this again next year.

