In 2013, two erstwhile Democrats traded control of the Washington State Senate to Republicans in exchange for better job titles and bigger offices.

In 2014, the real consequences of those partisan political machinations are clearer than ever. Progressive policies and job-creating infrastructure investments supported by both Gov. Jay Inslee and the Democratic-controlled House were blocked by Senate Republicans. They killed dozens of House-approved labor-backed bills on everything from wage theft to electricians’ certification, in most cases without a public hearing.

For a second straight session, Senate Republicans refused to allow a vote on a desperately needed House-approved transportation package. GOP leaders talked (a lot) about “reforming” transportation first, but never produced a proposal of their own caucus could support.

Right up to the session’s final day, Senate Republicans obstructed efforts to create jobs, blocking a school construction bill that had passed the House on a bipartisan 90-7 vote. Instead, Senate Republicans spent the 2014 session launching aggressive attacks on labor standards and public employees. Pushed by national right-wing groups, these bills had little chance of passage in blue Washington. It was all about election-year posturing.

As you’ll read throughout this WSLC Legislative Report, voters in Washington state didn’t ask for it, but in 2014 they got another bitter taste of Washington, D.C.-style political gridlock.

Democratic House advances Shared Prosperity Agenda

But Republican Senate blocks hearings, votes

In contrast to the low expectations some legislators and pundits established for the short 60-day session in 2014, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO supported a substantive set of budget and policy goals. This “Shared Prosperity Agenda to Rebuild the Middle Class” embraced the values of Washington’s working families in four main policy areas: addressing wage theft, approving paid safe and sick days, closing loopholes in the Affordable Care Act, and raising the state’s minimum wage.

“It is clear that gains from the economic recovery are not being shared by everyone in this state and income inequality has emerged as a priority issue in Washington and nationally,” said WSLC President Jeff Johnson in January. “This agenda takes concrete steps to address pressing issues and challenges faced today by middle-class families and low-income workers.”

By the session’s end in March, the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives had approved many of the bills included in the agenda. But the Republican-controlled Senate not only refused to vote on these important bills, they refused in most cases to even allow public hearings on them.

Senate GOP, Tom just say ‘no’ to progress, jobs

The highlight of the 2014 legislative session was Feb. 26 when Gov. Jay Inslee signed the “DREAM Act” into law. This creates the opportunity for children of undocumented immigrant workers to receive State Need Grants to attend public institutions of higher education. This law is a win for everyone—allowing children of immigrants to follow their educational dreams and allowing our state to benefit from the incredible creativity, talent, and productivity of these young people.

Apart from that, the session can be summarized by NO transportation package, NO capital budget, NO voting rights act, NO paid sick days, NO increased minimum wage, NO protections against wage theft...

Why so unproductive? Why weren’t tens of thousands of jobs created? Why weren’t income inequality and fair voting rights addressed? Because Sen. Rodney Tom (D-Medina) and the Republican majority controlling the State Senate are out of step with our values.

The first bill passed by the House Democratic Caucus was the DREAM Act, passed on Day 1 of the session. The first bill passed by the Senate Republican Caucus aimed to reduce injured workers’ benefits. This contrast in priorities was just the first of many that distinguished Democrats in the House who stood up for working people and Republicans in the Senate who mostly stood in the way.

Another year of Senate inaction on transportation

By JOE KENDO

If there was one thing that business, environmentalists, transit advocates, and the labor movement agreed upon this session, it was the need for a balanced, comprehensive transportation package.

Last year, this broad-based support led the House of Representatives to pass a compromise proposal to ensure safer roads and bridges, fewer traffic jams, local funding options for mass transit, improved freight and workforce mobility, sound environmental permitting standards, and thousands of family-wage jobs in a construction sector that has yet to recover from the Great Recession. But the Senate dithered in 2013, adjourning without voting on the plan or making a proposal of its own, despite two special sessions.

In the interim, Senate Transportation Committee Co-Chairs Curtis King (R-Yakima) and Tracey Eide (D-Federal Way) took the transportation conversation on the road, holding 10 town-hall meetings billed as Majority Coalition listening sessions, ostensibly to see what people really wanted. Those needs were made clear: safe roads, sturdy bridges, good jobs, and adequate transit. No one was clamoring to cut prevailing wages or decrease apprenticeship opportunities. Yet, those right-wing ideological demands kept creeping into the ever-changing list of “reforms” sought by Senate Republicans in exchange for transportation investments.

Compromises were made, negotiation sessions occurred ad nauseam, and...
By JOE KENDO

The 2014 legislative session saw a number of attacks aimed at the safety net for injured workers—attacks that reduce benefits, that allow for aggressive case management, and that could destabilize the financial health of the Washington’s workers’ compensation system.

LUMP-SUM BUIYOUTS—Three years ago, the legislature enacted sweeping changes to our workers’ compensation system. Those changes were part of a larger plan to reform the system, but they left many unanswered questions. In the years since, there have been significant changes to the way workers’ compensation cases are handled. For example, the number of lump-sum settlements has increased dramatically. This has led to concerns that employers are taking advantage of the system and that workers are not receiving fair compensation.

In response to these concerns, the WSLC has been working to protect workers’ rights. We have been advocating for legislation that would require employers to provide fair compensation for work-related injuries. We have also been working to ensure that workers have access to the resources they need to recover from their injuries.

In addition to these legislative efforts, we have been working to educate workers about their rights. We have been holding workshops and seminars on workers’ compensation, and we have been distributing information about the system to workers who need it.

We are proud of the progress we have made in protecting workers’ rights. We will continue to work to ensure that workers are treated fairly and that they have access to the resources they need to recover from their injuries.

By Robby Stern

So the 2014 session has ended and we did not have an opportunity to vote on thousands of new jobs, to increase the minimum wage, to provide paid sick days to one million workers in our state, to end the workfare system for those leaving from wage theft, to protect tax payers from the health care costs of large corporations, to create a real estate speculation tax, and to raise revenue from the rich and from closing unnecessary tax loopholes. Now what?

It is time for us to reflect on what we have accomplished and what we need to do in the future.

It is also time to strengthen our House and the majority Republican Caucus.

And to priorities at the ballot box this fall.

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Bills aim to improve, undermine ACA

By TERESA MOSQUEDA

Washington state is well on its way to creating affordable, accessible health care for the uninsured and underinsured as a result of the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). But questions remain about how to ensure the affordability of coverage, prevent low-income families from churning on and off of coverage, and require that everyone—including large corporations—do their part to keep Washingtonians covered.

In 2014, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO and the Healthy Washington Coalition prioritized health care policies to address these issues. These bills would have advanced health care reform implementation, ensured greater accountability, and expanded coverage for the most vulnerable, but they never made it to the governor’s desk. They included legislation to:

- Build the Basic Health Option — The ACA recognized that low-wage workers who earn between 138% to 200% of the federal poverty level may struggle to afford paying up to 6% of their income on health coverage through the exchange. That’s why it created the Federal Basic Health Option, a provision championed by U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), allowing states to create a state-run option for these low-wage workers and also provide coverage to lower wage undocumented immigrants not eligible for Medicaid.

- SB 6231 and HB 2594, sponsored by Sen. Karen Keiser (D-Des Moines) and Rep. Marcus Riccelli (D-Spokane), would have created the blueprint for this Basic Health Option. The House bill was eventually scaled down to a study, but both bills suffered the same fate: dying in the Republican-controlled Senate Health Care Committee.

- Create employer shared responsibility to cover Medicaid families — Some large corporations are taking advantage of a loophole in the ACA. By cutting employee hours under the threshold for health requirements, these companies dump low-wage employees onto Medicaid or force them to seek taxpayer-subsidized coverage through the exchange. The ACA was intended to cover the uninsured, not allow large multi-million-dollar corporations to create more uninsured.

- HB 2588, sponsored by Rep. Eileen Cody (D-West Seattle), would have charged a fee to large companies that do not provide health coverage to their low-wage workers on Medicaid. HB 2588 would help cover the cost of the state’s portion of Medicaid, increase Medicaid provider reimbursement rates, and invest in underserved areas of the state. The bill had an impressive hearing, but failed to make it out of the House Health Care and Wellness Committee.

The WSLC fought to advance these and other progressive health care policies, while also defending consumer protections and regulatory authority, which were under attack by conservative legislators.

For example, Sen. Randi Becker (R-Eatonville) introduced SB 6458 to eliminate the elected office of the State Insurance Commissioner and replace it with a non-elected board. This was a transparent attempt to block rule-making activities and would have weakened consumer protections and public accountability.

Republicans also continued to try to undermine the ACA and block efforts to cover the uninsured. SB 6474 (Sen. Ann Rivers, R-La Center) and SB 6354 (Sen. Bruce Dammeier, R-Walla Walla) were under attack by conservative legislators. The WSLC anticipates more attacks in 2015 on the ACA and our state regulatory protections for health insurance consumers. We will call out and defend against those attacks, and continue pushing for greater affordability, corporate responsibility, and continuity of coverage for all Washingtonians.

The annual WSLC Legislative Conference got a makeover in 2014. Instead of having lawmakers come to the Olympia Red Lion Hotel to brief members of WSLC-affiliated unions on the status of proposed legislation, the members went to them.

Union leaders, staffers and rank-and-file members met for breakfast and lobbying training on Feb. 7 at the WSLC’s Olympia office building. After learning about some pressing legislative issues facing labor, WSLC delegates walked to the Capitol campus to lobby their own legislators on these issues. Afterwards, they returned to the WSLC office for lunch, report-backs and a discussion with legislative leaders.

TWU’s The Impact tagged along with some “first-timers” from USW Local 12-591 in Anacortes to see what it was like for them to be lobbyists for a day. Check out that report at: www.thestand.org/?p=29844

Based on the positive feedback, the new and improved Legislative Lobbying Day was a great success.

WSLC Legislative Lobbying Day a success

Members of USW Local 12-591 in Anacortes discuss refinery safety with Sen. Kevin Ranker (D-Orcas Is.) on Legislative Lobbying Day.

Many of the rank-and-file union members who participated said that getting the opportunity to do some citizen lobbying at the Capitol was a great experience that they will encourage others at their unions to do in future years. So make plans to attend the 2015 WSLC Legislative Lobbying Day and recruit some members of your union to join you!

Senate blocks the Taxpayer Protection Act

Tax dollars should be spent in the most effective and efficient ways. The public deserves to know what the government is spending their tax dollars on. But right now, those basic rules that apply to state agencies don’t apply when Washington state outsources public services to private contractors.

State agencies have strict reporting requirements in the delivery of public services, making information available for review and inspection by the taxpayer. But private contractors delivering outsourced public services are not required to make information available for review and inspection. This lack of oversight leaves the state and taxpayers vulnerable to fraud and abuse.

The Taxpayer Protection Act (HB 2743), sponsored by Rep. Sam Hunt (D-Olympia), would improve cost-effectiveness, transparency, and accountability by any proposed outsourcing of public work. Under the bill:

- Agencies would conduct a cost analysis of any proposed outsourcing of work traditionally done by government employees before entering into a contract.

- Contracts would include terms that include a cancellation clause, performance objectives, employment and wage information, and a waiver of basic financial information of the contract. Contractors who have committed fraud or other crimes in the previous five years will be debarred from entering into agreements for work with the state.

- Agencies must monitor contracts to ensure they are meeting performance objectives and standards. If these terms are not being met, the state will have the ability to terminate the contract.

HB 2743 passed the House 53-44, but died in the Senate Government Operations Committee chaired by Sen. Pam Roach. (R-Auburn).
The Good

- HB 2672—Raising the state minimum wage to $12 an hour over the next three years and then resume annual increases to adjust for inflation.

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<th>Sponsor</th>
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The Bad

- HB 6053—Prohibiting payroll deduction of membership dues for public-sector unions and making it easier for members to opt out of dues not only for religious reasons, but for any “personal belief.”

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<th>Sponsor</th>
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The Ugly

- HB 2672—Increasing public-employee collective bargaining sessions to be open meetings.

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- HB 6304—Creating new administrative and reporting burdens for public-employee unions.

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- HB 6307—Repealing and preempting employment laws enacted by local governments, such as SeaTac’s voter-approved $15 minimum wage and Seattle’s paid sick leave ordinance.

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- HB 6495—Establishing a sub-minimum “training” wage for teenagers that’s 85% of the minimum wage for adults.

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- HB 2641—Establishing a sub-minimum “training” wage for new hires that’s 75% of the minimum wage for the first 680 hours of work, or 17 weeks for full-time employees.

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Washington State lobbied their legislators to support HB 2422/SB 6235, restoring cost-of-living adjustments to district-based elections. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 71-23, Jan. 13)

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HB 1348 (Reykdal)—Allowing community and technical colleges to use local funds for part- and full-time faculty step increases in pay. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 63-34, Jan. 24)

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HB 1413 (Moscoso)—Washington Voting Rights Act empowering local governments to voluntarily change their voting systems to district-based elections. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 53-44, Mar. 7)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 2332 (Sawyer)—Wage theft bill increasing damages employers must pay for stealing or illegally withholding workers’ wages. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 52-45, Jan. 29)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 2331 (Sells)—Wage theft bill requiring timely, certified payroll reports so workers can ensure they are being properly paid. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 54-44, Feb. 13)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

 Restaurants, bars, and other employers would have to allow their employees to earn and accumulate some paid safe and sick leave over time. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 52-45, Apr. 11)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 1313 (Jinkins)—Requiring businesses with at least five employees to allow their employees to earn and accumulate some paid safe and sick leave over time. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 53-44, Mar. 7)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 2527 (Ormsby)—‘Setting prevailing wage rates based on collective bargaining agreements in specified trades. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 59-37, Feb. 17)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 2334 (Riccelli)—Wage theft bill to prevent deliberate misclassification of employees as independent contractors. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 51-45, Feb. 14)

| Sponsor | Sen. Timm Ormsby (D-Camas) |

HB 2672—Increasing the state minimum wage to $12 an hour over the next three years and then resume annual increases to adjust for inflation.

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The Ugly

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### 1. Liias also voted “right” on House Vote #1 before being appointed to serve in the Senate.

2. Reps. Mia Gregerson, Jeff Morris, and Sharon Tomiko Santos voted “yes” on the floor on Vote #10 (HB 1260), but changed their official votes to “no” after its passage.

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**See House Vote Descriptions on Page 4.**
Lots of talk, little action on education

The 2014 legislative session started out promising for education, but ended disappointingly. Republicans in the Senate, in spite of rhetoric about the need for public education funding, failed to come through with any meaningful commitments, kicking the $4.5 billion can demanded by the McCleary decision to fully fund basic education by the next session down the road to the next biennium.

One of the biggest disappointments for education this session was the failure to fund cost-of-living pay increases for K-12 and community/technical college teachers and some staff. Again. This is the sixth straight year that our public educators have seen no cost of living adjustments (COLAs). The House passed HB 2422, which would have “unassigned” the COLA; they later proposed funding it by closing four tax loopholes. Senate Republicans couldn’t bring themselves to close even one tax loophole, and instead, they introduced a bill to the 650 already existing. HB 2422 died without a hearing in the Senate. Teacher salaries continue to decline, basic education needs to be better funded.

The session did hold one very bright spot—the passage of Washington State’s Dream Act, which removes barriers to financial aid from immigrant students aspiring to college. A small amount of money ($5 million) was appropriated to assist. (See story at right.)

In searching for a silver lining, credit can be given to the legislature for creating a study group to identify possible standards for para-educators and the professional development they will need to meet those standards. Para-educators will be part of the work group.

But, there is not much else to brag about this session. The American Federation of Teachers and Washington Education Association strongly advocated for HB 1348 to increase collective bargaining rights for two-year faculty by allowing colleges to use funds for bargaining regular step increases. This would give the colleges some ability to retain great faculty, and fund steps faculty earn from experience and continued education. HB 1348 was shepherded through the House on a 63-34 vote (see Vote #2) by Rep. Chris Reykdal (D-Olympia), but the Senate again resolved to be where the bills go to die as Sen. Janéa Holmquist Newby (R-Moses Lake), who chairs the Commerce and Labor Committee, failed to move the bill. A similar fate befell HB 1536, the bill to add a labor representative to state college boards of trustees. It sailed through the House on a 38-39 vote, but died without a hearing in the Senate.

Of course, this session saw the K-12 system embroiled in fights over teacher principal evaluations. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and Secretary Arne Duncan threatened to pull our state’s waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Act if the Legislature did not mandate use of a federally required test in the evaluation system. The test is given once a year, with scores coming back in August long after students have left school. So, the Senate again proposed to make sure teacher or principal effectiveness (a dubious proposition with no actual research to back it up)—this one is too late to do any good. The Legislature did the right thing and did not change the law. Republican leaders in the Senate ordered a vote on SB 5246 to require the evaluation system, but it failed 19-30 (see Vote #7). It remains to be seen if the DOE will do the right thing and extend the waiver. It’s a shame that so much energy was devoted to this struggle that fails to benefit a single student, while adequate funding for our state’s public education system remains elusive.

Our legislature has the authority and the ability to create a stellar public education system. The House made an effort, the Senate failed. Teachers will once again see their effective wages decline, tuition rates are frozen but still increasing out of reach, and progress toward fully funding basic education as mandated by the State Supreme Court has been stalled again. The Republican majority in the Senate appears bent on preventing meaningful progress. The session ended on time, candidates can begin raising money for their races. The next step is up to us.

Bipartisan capital budgets pass House, die in Senate

In the McCleary decision, the state Supreme Court laid out clear goals for the Legislature to meet with regard to class size and full-day kindergarten by 2018. But even if the Legislature came up with the revenue to fund it (which they haven’t yet), many school districts lack the space to accomplish those goals. For example, last year the Mukilteo school district turned down state funding to expand access to full-day kindergartens simply because they did not have the space.

This year, House leaders from both parties stepped up with a creative plan to give school districts the space they need to meet these McCleary goals—and to create some desperately needed construction jobs—all without raising taxes.

HB 2797, sponsored by Rep. Hans Dunshee (D-Snohomish) and Rep. Drew MacEwen (R-Union), would sell $700 million in bonds backed by lottery revenue to construct classrooms for full-day kindergarten. Republicans in the state, including the sons and daughters of immigrants, to compete for the opportunity to fund this program. The bill easily passed the House on a bipartisan vote of 65-32. The Senate took no action.

In the 2013, the House of Representatives passed HB 1817, sponsored by Rep. Zack Hudgins (D-Tukwila), also known as the Washington Dream Act, on a 71-23 bipartisan vote. The bill would allow all high school graduates in the state, including the sons and daughters of immigrants, to compete for state-funded financial aid to pursue their dreams for higher education. Deliberates representing unions around the state have repeatedly approved Washington State Labor Council resolutions in support of the Dream Act.

But it died last year in the Republican-controlled Senate, even though Majority Leader Rodney Tom (D-Medina) confessed to support it. Sen. Barbara Bailey (R-Oak Harb) was the committee chairman who quashed the bill in 2013, not only refused a committee vote, she also canceled a hearing for which more than 100 students had traveled to Olympia.

So in 2014, the House made it clear that it wanted action, voting on the very first day of the session Jan. 13 to pass HB 1817 again, this time on a 71-23 vote (see Vote #1). After enduring public criticism for killing the bill last year, the Senate agreed to vote on the Dream Act this time, but not before trying to take credit for the idea as their own. A nearly identical version—SB 6523 sponsored by none other than Sen. Bailey—appeared Jan. 31 was dubbed the “REAL Hope Act” and easily passed 35-10 (see Vote #2).

The House quickly concurred with the new version and Gov. Jay Inslee signed it into law at a joyous ceremony surrounded by students.

DREAM Act passes

The DREAM Act becomes REAL

“Bill simply allows all children in Washington to be treated the same. All young adults who are committed to the communities, who graduate from our high school, who get in to our state colleges and are already paying state tuition should be allowed to compete for the opportunity to get help with that tuition.”

— DREAM Act sponsor Rep. Zack Hudgins

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It’s no secret around Olympia that corporate interests want to weaken the ability of workers to speak out and represent their interests on the job, at the Capitol, and in their communities. When workers organize with their neighbors to fight for better wages and benefits, healthier environments, and decent public services, big business and the Tea Party get nervous because they see a challenge to their power and influence.

Some of the 2014 bills aiming to hamstring public employee unions included:

- SB 6300, sponsored by Sen. Randi Becker (R-Eatonville), would have required public employee unions to frequently file cumbersome new financial reports to the state that require details far beyond anything expected of private-sector unions or the businesses that have a multitude of tax breaks heaped on them every year. A union’s finances are not a big secret—members can simply go to a union meeting, where detailed financial reports are made available.
- SB 6053, sponsored by Sen. Jim Honeyford (R-Sunnyside), would have prohibited payroll deduction of membership dues for public-sector employees and would have blown open the definition of a religious objection to any alleged personal belief, no matter how outrageous or patently disingenuous.
- SB 6244, sponsored by Sen. Mike Hewitt (R-Walla Walla), attempted to widen the filing window for de-certification petitions, effectively tripling the amount of time organized workers would have to spend defending against decertification campaigns, which are often supported by third-party anti-union groups.
- SB 6183, sponsored by Sen. John Braun (R-Centralia), would have made state employee bargaining sessions open meetings. This would ensure that negotiations become grandstanding and posturing instead of workers and employers coming together to agree on a contract that sets fair rules and fair wages.

Nothing about these bills empowered public employees to want to make their lives better or to promote mutual respect between employers and their workers. The sole intent was to make it harder for public unions to exist.

Once again, the labor community came together and defended against these attacks. City employees, nurses, fire fighters, public health advocates, maritime workers, and state employees all showed up to educate lawmakers on how unions actually work. They explained the processes already in existence for workers to address wage theft. But in the Senate, Republican leadership—enabled by “Democratic” Sens. Rodney Tom and Tim Sheldon—spent more time taking pot-shots at the people who perform public services than they did addressing real issues. The 2014 legislative session could not have provided a starker contrast between these two competing visions for public policy.

At the end of the 2014 session, the legislature approved a bill that would have done real harm to needlessly form to workers on public-works projects.

Through the Community Economic Revitalization Board, our state grants and loan programs to local jurisdictions for infrastructure projects intended to promote business development and job creation. Like all state-funded public works, contractors on CERB projects adhere to wage and benefit standards that ensure construction workers are making livable wages.

HB 1260, a bill intended to streamline and clarify the CERB funding process, was amended by Sen. Brian Hatfield (D-Raymond) to strip CERB’s wage standard. After the House refused to concur with that amendment, a “compromise” was reached to remove the wage standard from half of the CERB distributions.

The Washington State Labor Council made the case to legislators that, at a time of growing income inequality, it makes no sense to strip workers of the most basic right to earn paid sick and safe leave and took bold action to address wage theft. But in the Senate, Republican leadership—enabled by “Democratic” Sens. Rodney Tom and Tim Sheldon—spent more time taking pot-shots at the people who perform public services than they did addressing real issues. The 2014 legislative session could not have provided a starker contrast between these two competing visions for public policy.
Shared Prosperity

Continued from Page 1

Here’s how each issue played out:

**END Wage and Revenue Theft**

A shocking number of workers are denied the wages they are owed for the work they perform. Unscrupulous employers pay less than what was agreed, force workers to perform duties off the clock, cheat state and local governments out of legally required taxes and insurance contributions, and sometimes, simply withhold pay all together.

All four bills introduced in 2014 to protect workers from wage theft passed the House, but were denied votes and killed in the Senate. They were:

- HB 2332 (Rep. David Snyder, D-Tacoma) would have made employers that willfully steal or illegally withhold wages liable for triple damages, rather than double, in a civil action. It passed the House 53-45 (see Vote #5), but was never heard in Senate Commerce and Labor Committee chaired by Sen. Janie Holmquist Newbry (R-Moses Lake).
- HB 2331 (Rep. Mike Sells, D-Everett) would require employers to file timely certified payroll reports so that workers can ensure they are being properly paid. It passed the House 54-44 (see Vote #6), and was granted a hearing but died in Holmquist Newbry’s Senate committee.
- HB 2333 (Rep. Cindy Ryu, D-Showare) would have protected workers from being fired, having hours cut, or otherwise retaliated against when they seek their lawfully earned wages. It passed the House 53-45 (see Vote #7), but was never heard in Holmquist Newbry’s Senate committee.
- HB 2334 (Rep. Marcus Riccelli, D-Spokane) would have addressed worker misclassification by clarifying the definition of independent contractors. It passed 51-45 (see Vote #8), but was never heard in the Senate.

**PASS Paid Sick Days**

We all get sick. But not all of us can stay home when we are contagious. An estimated 1.5 million workers in Washington state do not have access to paid sick days. Many of them work in the restaurants, grocery stores, medical centers and other service-oriented jobs that involve interacting with the public.

When they are sick, they work anyway or they will lose wages—and perhaps even their job.

A growing number of cities, including Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and New York City, are taking action to protect public health and approve minimum paid sick days standards so no one has to choose between their job and their family’s health.

HB 1313 would have required businesses with at least five employees to allow their employees to earn and accumulate some paid sick leave over time.

“No working family should be forced to leave a sick child at home or go to work with the flu for fear of losing their paycheck,” said HB 1313 sponsor Rep. Laurie Jinkins (D-Tacoma).

Strongly supported by the Washington Work and Family Coalition, which includes the WSLC and many other labor and community groups, HB 1313 passed the House 52-45 mostly along party lines (see Vote #4). It was granted a public hearing in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee but died there.

**CLOSE Loopholes in the Affordable Care Act**

Some big employers are exploiting the Affordable Care Act by shifting the cost of providing health coverage onto taxpayers. By cutting employer hours under the threshold for health requirements, these large companies dump low-wage employees onto Medicaid or force them to seek taxpayer-subsidized coverage through the state health exchange.

HB 2588, sponsored by Rep. Eileen Codly (D-West Seattle), would have helped cover the state’s Medicaid costs, increased Medicaid provider reimbursement rates, and invested in underserved areas of the state, by imposing a fee on large corporations that do not provide health coverage to low-wage workers on Medicaid.

It had an impressive hearing, but failed to make it out of the House Health Care Committee.

No one who works full time should have to live in poverty. That was the message of the 1998 voter-approved initiative 688, which have allowed their minimum wages to stagnate and lose value over the years. However, studies indicate that, even at $9.32, our minimum wage isn’t enough for full-time workers to meet basic needs.

Rep. Jessyn Farrell (D-Seattle) and 32 other House Democrats introduced HB 2672 that would have raised the state minimum wage for adults to $12 an hour over the next three years and then resumed annual increases to adjust for inflation. Dozens of low-wage workers and other supporters attended the bill’s hearing and it was approved by the House Labor & Workforce Development Committee. However, it was referred to House Appropriations, where it died.

**Transportation**

Continued from Page 1

Press conferences were held, but once again in 2014, not once did the Senate take a vote on investing in Washington’s transportation needs.

Last year, the House of Representatives passed a transportation package to inject $10 billion into our local economies. But this year in the Senate, Republicans failed again to deliver the votes to move a package—any package—forward.

Instead of investing in our state’s communities, Majority Leader Sen. Rodney Tom (D-Medina) and his Republican colleagues led the opposition. Instead of securing the safety of our bridges, King insisted on playing games with transportation sales tax revenues. Instead of creating 75,000 to 100,000 living-wage jobs, the Republicans on the Senate Transportation Committee insisted on eroding prevailing wages, pay that would help parents send their kids to college and help young families buy their first homes.

In the end, it’s hard to tell what exactly the Senate leadership wanted. Some doubt they ever intended to come to an agreement, given their apparent inability to take a vote on new fuel revenue to pay for these roads and bridges. While the negotiations failed to produce an agreement, they did provide an infor-