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# 2015 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The WSLC's report and voting record from the 2015 session of the Washington State Legislature

# Shutdown politics in Senate

This is no way to run a state government.

The Republican-controlled Senate embraced the threat of a state shutdown this year so Washington's wealthiest could continue to avoid paying their fair share and to pursue an ideological anti-union agenda. After three costly overtime sessions and 26,000 pink-slip warnings sent to state workers, a budget deal was reached just hours before the shutdown was to begin.

It was a game of political chicken straight out of the GOP playbook in the other Washington, and it brought needless stress to thousands of state employee families and countless other people and businesses that rely on important state services. It also disrespected

state employees, holding hostage their *first raises in seven years* to push anti-union collective bargaining bills that are part of a national campaign financed by billionaire right-wing conservatives (see story below).

What did Senate Republican budget negotiators, led by Sen. Andy Hill (R-Redmond), get out of it? They killed an effort to help fund schools though a capital-gains tax affecting a tiny fraction of the state's wealthiest families. They avoided closing corporate tax loopholes for oil companies and other special interests by insisting on budget gimmicks, like assuming we'll all be smoking a lot more marijuana. They retained America's most unfair tax system, where low-income

and middle-class workers pay more while the richest people pay the lowest taxes of any state in the nation.

As you'll read throughout this report, it was a theme that played out in most policy areas this year. Gov. Jay Inslee and the Democratic-controlled House pursued measures to address growing income inequality and to make state government function better. The Senate, with its two-vote Republican majority, obstructed those efforts while serving the selfish few at the top and pushing a politically motivated agenda.

But in the end, 2015 will be remembered as the year extremist Republicans decided their right-wing wish list was worth shutting the state down.

## What got done, what didn't

By JEFF JOHNSON

While some good things came out of the 2015 session, huge opportunities to lessen inequality and to the fix our structural budget/revenue deficit were dismissed and passed up by Sens. Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville) and Andy Hill (R-Redmond) and their band of Tea Party Republicans.

The process was ugly and bizarre.

**SESSION SUMMARY**

After Governor Jay Inslee signed the operating budget on June 30, preventing a state shutdown, the House and Senate adjourned in the wee hours of July 1 with voting only partially complete on the transportation package and the capital budget. Last-minute bargaining derailed a Senate vote on suspending the I-1351 class-size initiative, which temporarily left a \$2 billion hole in the just-signed operating budget.

Senate Majority Leader Schoesler decried as "extortion" the Democrats' refusal to vote on suspending I-1351 unless a student assessment bill—one that passed 92-6 in the House—was also brought up for a vote. He and the extreme right Republican Senate had just extorted the House and the governor

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## Shared Prosperity in the HOUSE

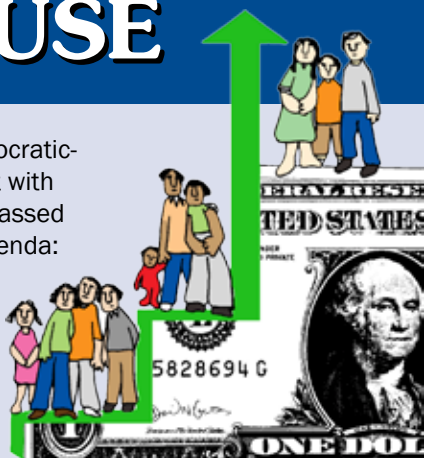
Speaker Frank Chopp, leader of the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, met with workers on March 3, the day the House passed bills from the WSLC Shared Prosperity Agenda:

**RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE** to \$12/hour over the next four years. HB 1355, sponsored by Rep. Jessyn Farrell, was supported by every Democrat in the House.

**PAID SAFE AND SICK LEAVE** for all workers in Washington state. HB 1356, sponsored by Rep. Laurie Jenkins (pictured above at the far left), also was supported by every Democrat in the House.

Meanwhile, every House Republican—every single one—voted against both bills.

**House Democrats advance Shared Prosperity Agenda—See story on Page 8**



## Deal with GOP's extreme agenda at the ballot box

Elections matter.

Republican control of the Senate and a significant Republican minority in the House is hazardous to our state's health and will continue to be so until we change things at the ballot box.

Three days out from the end of the second extra legislative session (I refuse to call it a "special session," seeing nothing particularly special about it), Senate Republicans introduced and heard two bills. One would create a 30-day continuing resolution to prevent the shutdown of state government. You have to love the irony of this—it's like the schoolyard bully declaring that while we couldn't come to an agreement over the use of your lunch money, we will continue meeting over the summer. And



**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**  
**Jeff Johnson**

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## Republicans target public employees' rights

*Sens. Baumgartner, Braun, Hill lead ideological attacks*

By JOE KENDO

Since 2008, public sector workers have made significant sacrifices to help the state, counties, and cities make ends meet as state revenue plummeted during the recession. Public workers gave up more than their fair share while legislators resisted raising revenue to fund increasing demands for services during this period.

State employees suffered 3 percent wage cuts, were denied previously negotiated pay increases, and were forced to provide more services to the public with fewer resources. City, county, and state employees paid more for their health care during this period, and public workers at all levels of government were subject to unpaid furloughs and other workload increasing burdens.

After nearly seven years of deep cuts, increased work load, and losses in pay, it should come as no surprise that in 2015, a great deal of ground needed

to be made up. But instead of supporting those who support us, an unprecedented number of attacks were leveled against workers this session as the Republican controlled Senate went full ALEC (the corporate-funded "bill mill" American Legislative Exchange Council) in their treatment of the public sector.

In the Commerce and Labor Committee chaired by Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane) no fewer than nine bills were heard to weaken, overburden,

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# State’s solution at the ballot box

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the second bill calls the operating budget good and done—still leaving about a \$300 million gap between the House and Senate spending levels and would only fund state employee contracts if limitations to future collective bargaining rights were passed, SB 6126.

At the beginning of the Ways and Means Committee hearing Sen. Andy Hill (R-Redmond) had the chutzpah to say that the debate over taxes, education funding, and the social safety net was over. As if we have come even close to fixing these gaping problems and the myriad of other issues we have not addressed as a state.

But Hill’s job was to stay on message. His message was that the Senate and House are really just down to the issue of college tuition. And the Senate Republicans favor a 25% reduction in college tuition and the Democrats, Gov. Jay Inslee in particular, want to keep talking about closing tax loopholes, poor people, teacher COLAs, and other ways to share prosperity. The Republican conclusion being, as shamelessly broadcast in a June 25 political ad funded by the Washington State Republican Party: “Governor Inslee wants to shut down state government, shut down our state parks and keep tuitions high.”

The truth of the matter is that Senator Hill and his extreme right party was forcing the state to the brink of shutdown because they don’t care that we have the most regressive tax system in the country, they don’t care that teachers will only get one-quarter of the cost-of-living pay increases that the legislators themselves will get, and they don’t recognize the social safety net has so many holes in it that thousands of our most vulnerable citizens fall through it every week.

Everyone would like to see tuition costs go down. But how about raising wages so that more folks could actually afford college tuition? How about a tax system where everyone pays their fair share? How about closing unnecessary corporate tax loopholes? How about enough affordable housing so that people could afford to live in the cities where they work? How about requiring paid safe and sick days or fair scheduling?

These issues are not on the Republican agenda. Most issues that working class families care about are not on their agenda.

It is time to change this. It is time to support only candidates who support policies and bills that broadly share the prosperity the workers create.



PRESIDENT’S COLUMN  
**Jeff Johnson**

# What got done, what didn’t

Continued from **Page 1**

by forcing a poison pill into the transportation package that blocked the governor from doing anything administratively on clean fuel standards for years. It seems that one person’s extortion is another’s good policy.

Legislating is getting harder to do. We have now had 21 extra legislative sessions in this century, so far. Nearly a third of them (6) since the GOP took control of the Senate in 2013. Another three extra sessions happened when they controlled the Senate in 2003.

The Republican Senate, with Sens. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane) and John Braun (R-Centralia) in the lead, kept up a relentless attack on collective bargaining rights, injured worker benefits, and a refusal to deal with raising the minimum wage or paid safe and sick leave. Limiting collective bargaining rights (SB 6126) remained on the table until the last day of the second extra session.

The Republican Senate also refused to pass the Voting Rights Act to address discriminatory voting practices in cities and counties that have prevented candidates of color from being elected to public office.

## Operating budget

At the end of the day some components of note in the operating budget were:

- State employee contracts were funded as bargained with a 4.8% pay increase over two years—the first raises in seven years—and maintaining health benefits.
- A \$1.3 billion down payment was made on the *McCleary* court order to lower K-3 class sizes; expand all-day kindergarten; and pick up much of the cost of local schools’ materials, supplies and operating expenses. However, the issue of paying the estimated \$3.5 billion cost for teachers’ compensation was not addressed.
- Teachers received a COLA of 3% and a one-time 1.8% bonus that will not go into their base pay.
- Tuition at four-year colleges and community and technical colleges was lowered. Over the next two years there will be a 15% tuition cut at the University of Washington and Washington State University; a 20% tuition cut at the regional four-year colleges; and a 5% tuition cut at two-year colleges.
- For the first time ever, the UW Labor Archives was funded at a \$200,000 annual level.
- Community and technical college faculty will be able to bargain over local funds for the next two years.

The final operating budget included \$700 million in natural revenue growth, \$300 million in anticipated taxes from marijuana sales, and about \$100 million stolen (transferred) from the Public Works Account and other one-time budget gimmicks. This masks the problem that we lack the revenue to pay for the natural growth in current services the state provides, never mind the remaining billions due under *McCleary*, or repairing the holes in the social safety net devastated by “Great Recession” austerity, or the need to dramatically increase our investments in higher education, etc.

House Finance Chair Reuven Carlyle (D-Seattle) underscored the fact that our tax system is outmoded and too narrowly based to support a modern economy and the associated level of services. Two-thirds of our

economy is made up of services but we have no sales tax on services. Our Business & Occupation tax system is unfair to small business and our major industries pay a relatively small share of the overall tax burden. Our system is top heavy with tax loopholes that should be closed. Unlike 41 other states, we do not have a capital gains tax, never mind an income tax. And our property taxes are capped at a one-percent growth rate.

Both Gov. Inslee and the House Democrats put a number of tax alternatives on the table—capital gains, B&O reform, carbon fee, and closing tax loopholes. Sen. Hill didn’t like any of these ideas. At the end of the day, Republicans agreed to close a few tax loopholes but only at the cost of extending others and also creating some new ones. The net increase in revenue from this exchange was very small.

Once again the opportunity to make our state a first class place to live, work and learn was cashed in for Republican ideological beliefs.

## Transportation

After three years of Republican foot dragging, a \$16 billion transportation package passed in late June. Well, almost.

An 11.9-cent gas tax increase phased in over two years was approved, but the second extra legislative session ended without the transportation bonding bill or the project list bill passing. It wasn’t until triple overtime on July 10 that those bills passed, the culmination of a long, hard coalitional effort by labor, environmental and business groups to pass a transportation package. It will significantly increase safety, decrease congestion, finish major economic corridors, improve freight mobility, add another ferry (built in Washington), improve transit funding, fund stormwater clean-up projects, create tens of thousands of union jobs, and return hundreds of millions of dollars to the general fund over the next 15 years.

But with the victory comes a major loss. The cost of the transportation package was a poison pill on clean fuel standards. This was pure extortion and the type of backward thinking we have come to expect from the Republican Party. Given the crisis of climate change, we need to work together with every policy tool possible to dramatically lower carbon emissions over the next several decades. The truth is that the gas and oil industry is going to have start paying their fair share of the costs of this pollution and its negative impacts on our health and communities.

## Capital budget

The capital budget was also left partially undone on July 1 with the bonding bill still hanging out there. Some of the pieces that we have been tracking and that will achieve policy goals and create jobs are:

- \$75 million for farmworker housing,
- \$53 million for stormwater clean-up projects,
- \$35.6 million flood plain projects,
- \$40.4 million clean energy fund grants,
- \$25 million energy efficiency and solar grants for public buildings, and
- Casa Latina (elevator) \$150,000.

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## Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

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# An investment in Washington

*Transportation package and capital budget build our state*

By JOE KENDO

It is a good time to live in Washington. Our economy is clearly on the upswing after years of stagnant job and wage growth, and many sectors damaged by the 2008 recession are primed and ready for work. People from all over the country are pouring into our state for new job opportunities, vibrant communities, natural beauty, and diverse cultural opportunities. The Office of Financial Management estimates an additional 1.2 million Washingtonians by 2030, and nearly 8.8 million people in total by 2040. That's nearly two million more people than live in Washington today.

While we welcome the economic growth and cultural vibrancy these transplants bring, we also live with the negative consequences of unplanned growth on a daily basis. These people will need jobs, and they will need reliable transportation options to get there.

In 2011, the Seattle-to-Everett commute averaged 62 minutes. That's two fewer hours per day, every day, to spend with one's family, church, or recreational sports league. Two fewer hours helping a child with math homework, or cooking healthy meals, or simply relaxing after working your shift. By 2014, that commute increased another 18 minutes—which means *nearly three hours a day in a car*, inching through Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood.

This is not an insurmountable problem. But for too long our elected leaders have been unable to buoy the clear interest of the people of our state—present and future—against base political instincts and demands for a free lunch. But finally, during the unlikely of legislative sessions, the 2015 Legislature made nearly \$35 billion in job-creating infrastructural investments that will establish a steady, reliable framework to put Washingtonians to work and improve our quality of life for another generation.

The elusive state transportation package took three years, and nearly 10 pieces of legislation to complete, but its passage will ensure an equitable distribution of mobility infrastructure and job opportunities statewide.

More than \$16 billion will be invested over 16 years in new ferries, roads, bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit resources. An additional \$15 billion will be raised, pending approval by central Puget Sound voters, to build the third stage of Sound Transit's Link Light Rail which will provide reliable, congestion-free travel options for workers and their families in South King and North Pierce counties, Redmond and Issaquah, and Lynnwood and Everett, as well as connecting West Seattle and Ballard to the lines already operating through Seattle. This will have the added bonus of reducing workers' reliance on carbon intensive car-oriented commuting, and reduce the overall cost of transportation between the suburbs and the dense urban cores where so many people work.

But that's not all. To ensure our state is meeting its needs for clean energy jobs, water infrastructure, and affordable housing investments, budget negotiators also agreed on a \$3 billion capital budget, after failing to do so in 2014. These investments include housing options for farm workers and seniors, new school buildings to help reduce class sizes, and tens of millions of dollars for research and project development in support of clean energy technology.

These investments act as a trellis upon which our population and economy can sustainably grow. Whether you live in Seattle, Spokane, Kent, Marysville, Lakewood, or Walla Walla, opportunities for economic improvement will increase. Our commutes will be safer and more reliable, and even if there is another economic downturn on the horizon, a massive public investment of nearly \$35 billion over 16 years will still drive good, family wage employment, in cutting edge, forward looking industries.

We can do big things. When workers, businesses, transit advocates, environmental stewards, communities of color, farmers, farm workers, and land use planners come together, we can do them better.



A Feb. 20 rally banner shows Washington is an outlier for failing to link jobs to aerospace incentives.

## Accountability sought for tax breaks

When legislators rushed into special session in November 2013 to approve aerospace industry tax breaks worth \$8.7 billion over 16 years, we were told that the incentives would grow—or at least maintain—good family-wage jobs.

We'd been burned before by 2003 incentives that failed to stop Boeing from expanding 787 production outside the state despite a multi-billion tax break. So in 2013, when the incentives were extended from 2024 to 2040, the Legislature added "intent" language to guarantee *all* 777X assembly and wing assembly would be performed here.

But within weeks of its passage, we got burned again. Boeing announced it would move thousands of engineering jobs out of state and out of country. Unlike tax incentives in Missouri, South Carolina and other states, there were still no requirements to ensure that the tax breaks actually increase jobs.

But aerospace tax breaks don't just go to Boeing, they also go to hundreds of suppliers. More than one-third (38 percent) of non-Boeing aerospace employees in the state earn less than \$15 per hour. Those workers' families likely qualify for state assistance for health care, housing and other basic necessities.

In other words, because our incentives lack the accountability standards required in most states, taxpayers are subsidizing one of biggest corporations in the world even as it sheds jobs in our state. Plus, we are subsidizing low-wage aerospace companies whose employees can't meet their families' basic needs.

So in 2015, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace/IPFTE 2001 and Machinists Union District Lodge 751 backed changing our tax incentive law to create some accountability.

■ HB 2147, sponsored by Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett), tied Boeing's aerospace incentives to maintaining state employment. It would cut the size of Boeing's tax break when employment falls below the Oct. 31, 2013, baseline of 83,295 employees.

■ HB 1786, from Rep. Mia Gregerson (D-SeaTac), required aerospace firms receiving the incentives to pay veteran employees at least the state median wage for a one-earner family, or about \$52,000 per year.

Boeing and other aerospace workers packed a March 13 hearing to support the bills, but they didn't advance in 2015. With polls showing that more than two-thirds of Washington voters support tying aerospace tax breaks to maintaining jobs with livable wages, these bills will be back.

## Little accomplished for injured workers

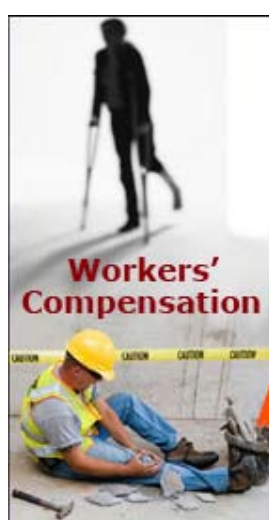
*GOP pursues usual cuts, but fails*

By JOE KENDO

The 2015 Legislature indulged in a lot of bluster and public theater on the issue, but accomplished little with respect to the workers' compensation safety net for injured workers. As in past sessions, conservative factions and the business interests they serve came out swinging in January with a half-dozen radical proposals to cut or deny injured workers' benefits.

An expansion of compromise-and-release lump-sum settlements, an old-hat attempt to leverage injured workers into settling their claims for pennies on the dollar, found a home in SBs 5513 and 5516. The former, sponsored by Sen. John Braun (R-Centralia), sought to expand buyouts to younger workers despite the program's failure to live up to the wildly inaccurate cost-saving estimates from 2011. Those estimated savings have been lowered by 85% in the four years since. Unfortunately, SB 5513 passed the Senate with support from Democratic Sens. Hargrove, Hatfield, Hobbs and Mullet. Thankfully, it failed to get the support of Republican Sens. Miloscia and Roach. Though it died in the House, its Senate passage illustrates the irrational obsession of Senate Republican leadership with converting this safety net into a risky game of Let's Make a Deal.

Further attacks from Sen. Baumgartner's Commerce and Labor Committee included bills that would have slashed benefits for injured nurses, construc-



tion workers, injured workers with families, and some grocery workers (SB 5510). SBs 5331 and 5420 would have handed over our workers' compensation system to private insurance companies like AIG, and another (SB 5509) would have made it functionally impossible for workers suffering from an occupational disease to secure the treatment they need to get well, get back to work, and move on with their lives.

But not everything was so bleak this session. Working with our community partners, the Washington State Labor Council supported legislation that would have allowed workers with Permanent Partial Disabilities to continue to receive medical treatment in instances where their claims were prematurely closed (HB 1613). Another WSLC-supported bill would have secured attorney fees and costs for injured workers in court settlements when they prevailed during appeals (HB 1611), and another would have increased penalties for self-insured employers who fail to meet their legal obligations to pay benefits pending hearings before the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals (HB 1612). These bills failed to receive a floor vote in the House, but the WSLC will continue to seek justice for these workers.



# Some votes that didn't happen

Lots of bills that would have had a major impact for Washington's working families never get a vote. But you can tell who supports the good, bad and ugly bills by checking the list of sponsors. Here are some of those bills and the legislators who signed on as co-sponsors. (Democrats are listed in **bold**.)



■ HB 1354/SB 5569—WAGE THEFT RETALIATION—Protecting workers from retaliation for speaking up about wage theft and requesting rightfully earned wages

SPONSORS: Rep. **Cindy Ryu** (D-Shoreline) and Sen. **Bob Hasegawa** (D-Seattle)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. **Goodman, S. Hunt, Riccelli, Farrell, Cody, Tharinger, Ortiz-Self, Sullivan, Bergquist, Pollet, Dunshee, Fitzgibbon, Moscoso, Appleton, Sells, Robinson, Reykdal, Walkinshaw, Wylie, Gregory, Moeller, Gregerson, Stanford, and Ormsby.** Sens. **Jayapal, McCoy, Kohl-Welles, Conway, Fraser, Ranker, Rolfes, Frockt, Keiser, Liias, McAuliffe, Chase, Darneille, Nelson, and Billig.**

■ HB 1716—FAMILY UNITY ACT—Making communities safer and keeping immigrant families together by ensuring that local law enforcement agencies focus on their primary missions of serving and protecting the community, instead of immigration enforcement.

SPONSOR: Rep. **Luis Moscoso** (D-Mtlake Terrace)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. **Appleton, Sells, Ortiz-Self, Robinson, Jinkins, Gregerson, Ryu, Peterson, Walkinshaw, Santos, Pollet, and Farrell.**

■ HB 1733/SB 5672—SAFE NURSE STAFFING—Directing the Department of Health to establish and enforce patient assignment limits and set a maximum number that can be assigned to each registered nurse.

SPONSOR: Rep. **Eileen Cody** (D-Seattle) and Sen. **Steve Conway** (D-Tacoma)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. **Ryu, S. Hunt, Peterson, Jinkins, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, Hudgins, Reykdal, Walkinshaw, Wylie, Fitzgibbon, Farrell, Sullivan, Bergquist, Dunshee, Moscoso, Appleton, Sells, Pollet, Riccelli, Robinson, Senn, Ormsby, Lytton, Tarleton, Sawyer, Moeller, Fey, Pettigrew, Gregerson, Orwall, Santos, Kirby, McBride, Takko, Gregory, Clibborn, Van De Wege, Tharinger, and Kagi.** Sens. **Keiser, Hasegawa, Kohl-Welles, Fraser, Benton, and Darneille.**



■ HB 1104—AG GAG—An American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model bill making it a crime to document what happens on farms without the owner's written consent.

SPONSOR: Rep. **Joe Schmick** (R-Colfax)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. **Haler, Robinson, and Buys.**

■ SB 5329—PUBLIC BARGAINING—Politicizing all state employee collective bargaining talks by making them open public meetings. This bill was pushed by the right-wing anti-union Freedom Foundation.



## Looking to the future

*These young men were among the more than 800 union members and their families who gathered on Feb. 20 on the steps of the State Capitol. They were rallying in support of the Washington State Labor Council's Shared Prosperity Agenda and against legislative attacks on workers' freedom of association, apprenticeship programs, and wage standards.*

SPONSOR: Sen. **John Braun** (R-Centralia)

CO-SPONSORS: Sens. **Becker, Schoesler, Padden, Angel, Warnick, Honeyford, and Hewitt.**

■ SB 5332—PRE-EMPTING LOCAL STANDARDS—Pre-empting local jurisdictions' ordinances, such as SeaTac's minimum wage and Seattle's sick leave, and all future ordinances to change how they are applied to union members. This would create conflicts with collectively bargained contracts, such as building trades workers' hour banks for purposes of sick leave.

SPONSOR: Sen. **John Braun** (R-Centralia)

CO-SPONSORS: Sen. **Becker, Rivers, Schoesler, Angel, Warnick, Honeyford, and Hewitt.**

■ SB 5514—MINIMUM WAGE/O.T. EXCUSE—Creating a "good-faith" defense for employers that fail to pay minimum or overtime wages.

SPONSOR: Sen. **John Braun** (R-Centralia)

CO-SPONSORS: Sens. **Baumgartner, Padden, Sheldon, Schoesler, Angel, Bailey, Warnick, and Honeyford.**

■ SB 5707—PREVAILING WAGE EXEMPTION—Exempting certain cities and projects from state prevailing wage standards.

SPONSOR: Sen. **Doug Erickson** (R-Waterstreet Cafe)

CO-SPONSORS: Sens. **Baumgartner, Bailey, Warnick, and Padden.**



■ HB 2068—"RIGHT-TO-WORK"—Making Washington an anti-union so-called "right-to-work" state

that bans union-security agreements.

SPONSOR: Rep. **Matt Shea** (R-Spokane Valley)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. **Scott, Taylor, G. Hunt, Young, and Condotta**

■ SB 5045/HB 2068—PROMOTING "RIGHT-TO-WORK"—Promoting the decertification of public employees' union-security clauses in all state, county and municipal employees' contracts in Washington state.

SPONSOR: Sen. **Jan Angel** (R-Port Orchard) and Rep. **Jesse Young** (R-Gig Harbor)

CO-SPONSORS: Sen. **Hewitt** and Reps. **Taylor, G. Hunt, Shea, Scott**

VOTING "YES" IN COMMITTEE: Sens. **Baumgartner, Braun, King, Warnick, Hill, Dammeier, Honeyford, Bailey, Becker, Brown, Hewitt, O'Ban, Padden, Parlette, and Schoesler.**

■ SB 5420—WORKERS' COMP PRIVATIZATION—Privatizing our state-run workers' compensation system, an idea overwhelmingly rejected by voters in every county of the state.

SPONSOR: Sen. **Michael Baumgartner** (R-Spokane)

CO-SPONSORS: Sen. **Braun**

VOTING "YES" IN COMMITTEE: **Baumgartner, Braun, King, and Warnick.**

■ SB 5671—BANNING UNION SECURITY—Expanding the *Harris v. Quinn* decision to create so-called "right-to-work" bargaining restrictions for family child care providers, adult family home providers, language access providers, and home care providers.

SPONSOR: Sen. **Michael Baumgartner** (R-Spokane)

CO-SPONSORS: Sens. **O'Ban, Braun, and Angel.**

VOTING "YES" IN COMMITTEE: **Baumgartner, Braun, King, and Warnick.**



# SENATE

**1** ESSB 5990 (King)—**Exempt transportation projects from sales tax**; siphons money from schools and operating budget. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 26-23, Feb. 27)

**2** **ESSB 5991 (King)—Shift funds from Environmental Legacy Stewardship Account** to pay for unrelated projects. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 27-22, Feb. 27)

**3** ESB 5513 (Braun)—**Expand compromise-and-release** structured settlements by lowering age limit for injured workers. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 28-21, Mar. 10)

● — “Right” vote      ○ — “Wrong” vote      E — Excused      (Democrats are listed in bold.)

**4** ESB 5226 (Becker)—**Mandate onerous financial reports for unions.** “Right” vote: NO (Passed 26-22, Mar. 10)

## 5 ESSB 5899 (Liias)—Relax restrictions on payday loans. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 30-18, Mar. 10)

**6** ESB 5854 (Braun)—**Post collective bargaining agreements online** for all public employee contracts. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 30-19, Mar. 11)

**7** ESSB 5748 (Litzow)—Evaluate teachers and principals based on student test scores. “Right” vote: NO

(Passed 26-23, Mar. 11)

**8** SSB 6088 (Braun)—**Relax class-size requirements in voter-approved Initiative 1351.** “Right” vote: NO (Passed 27-22, Apr. 6)

**9** ESSB 5077 (Hill)—**Operating budget** that included attacks on collective bargaining and other bad policy. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 26-23, Apr. 6)

**10** ESB 5863 (Jayapal)—**Promote apprenticeship** programs for highway construction workers. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 38-9, Apr. 16)

Senator	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2015 %	LIFE- TIME
Angel	26	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	20	19
Bailey	10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	13
Baumgartner	6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	9
Becker	2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	11
Benton	17	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	26
<b>Billig</b>	<b>3</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>
Braun	20	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	0
Brown	8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	10	6
<b>Chase</b>	<b>32</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Cleveland</b>	<b>49</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	<b>90</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Conway</b>	<b>29</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Dammeier	25	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	13
Dansel	7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	10	11
<b>Darneille</b>	<b>27</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>
Ericksen	42	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	15
Fain	47	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	15

												2015 %	LIFE- TIME
Senator	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
<b>Fraser</b>	<b>22</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Frockt</b>	<b>46</b>	●	●	●	E	E	●	○	●	●	●	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Habib</b>	<b>48</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	<b>90</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Hargrove</b>	<b>24</b>	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	<b>70</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Hasegawa</b>	<b>11</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Hatfield</b>	<b>19</b>	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>
Hewitt	16	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	11
Hill	45	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	12
<b>Hobbs</b>	<b>44</b>	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	E	<b>44</b>	<b>62</b>
Honeyford	15	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	7
<b>Jayapal</b>	<b>37</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Keiser</b>	<b>33</b>	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	<b>90</b>	<b>95</b>
King	14	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	14
<b>Kohl-Welles</b>	<b>36</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	<b>90</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Liias</b>	<b>21</b>	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	<b>80</b>	<b>96</b>
Litzow	41	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	14
<b>McAuliffe</b>	<b>1</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>

Senator	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2015 %	LIFE- TIME
<b>McCoy</b>	<b>38</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>93</b>
Miloscia	30	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	20	87
<b>Mullet</b>	<b>5</b>	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	<b>60</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Nelson</b>	<b>34</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>95</b>
O'Ban	28	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	17
Padden	4	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	10	7
Parlette	12	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	14
Pearson	39	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	●	30	16
<b>Pedersen</b>	<b>43</b>	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Ranker</b>	<b>40</b>	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	<b>90</b>	<b>93</b>
Rivers	18	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	14
Roach	31	○	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	●	50	38
<b>Rolfes</b>	<b>23</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	<b>100</b>	<b>89</b>
Schoesler	9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	10	11
<i><b>Sheldon</b></i>	<i><b>35</b></i>	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	<i><b>20</b></i>	<i><b>27</b></i>
Warnick	13	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	<b>E</b>	0	12

# HOUSE

**1 SHB 1089 (Hunt, S.)—Promote responsible bidders on public contracts** by adding restrictions for wage violators. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 60-38, Feb. 16)

**2** HB 1355 (Farrell)—**Raise state minimum wage**  
to \$12 an hour over four years. “Right” vote: YES  
(Passed 51-46, Mar. 3)

**3** HB 1356 (Jenkins)—Allow all workers in Washington to earn **paid safe and sick leave**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 51-46, Mar. 3)

**4** ESHB 2131 (Kirby)—Establish insurance requirement for drivers of **commercial transportation services**.  
“Right” vote: YES (Passed 77-17, Mar. 3)

**5** ESHB 1745 (Moscoso)—**Washington State Voting Rights Act.** “Right” vote: YES (Passed 52-46, Mar. 5)

**6 HB 1590 (Reykdal)—Promote apprenticeship for electricians.** “Right” vote: YES (Passed 52-46, Mar. 5)

**7 HB 1541 (Santos)—Close education opportunity gap.** “Right” vote: YES (Passed 53-45, Mar. 5)

**8 HB 1230 (Sells)—Allow authorization of interest arbitration** when there has been an Unfair Labor Practice. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 51-47, Mar. 6)

**9** HB 1863 (Reykdal)—**Step pay increases** for academic employees at state community and technical colleges. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 64-34, Mar. 6)

**10** ESHB 1646 (Senn)—**Equal Pay Opportunity Act** empowering workers to combat wage discrimination. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 55-43, Mar. 11)

[illegible][illegible]

Representative	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2015 %	LIFE- TIME
Rodne	5	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	16
Ryu	32	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Santos	37	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	95
Sawyer	29	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Schmick	9	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	11
Scott	39	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	10
Sells	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Senn	41	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Shea	4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	11
Short	7	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	11
Smith	10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	17
Springer	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	77
Stambaugh	25	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	20	20
Stanford	1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Stokesbary	31	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	30	30
Sullivan	47	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	86
Takko	19	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	80
Tarleton	36	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Taylor	15	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	9
Tharinger	24	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	89
Van De Wege	24	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	86
Van Werven	42	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	0	0
Vick	18	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	7
Walkinshaw	43	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Walsh	16	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	40	28
Wilcox	2	○	○	○	E	○	○	○	○	●	○	11	13
Wilson	17	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	10	10
Wylie	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	89
Young	26	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	20	21
Zeiger	25	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	30	40



# Short-term fixes only for education

The Washington State Labor Council 2015 Shared Prosperity Agenda recognized the important role that public education has in our state. It's a priority echoed by clear directives from both the courts in the *McCleary* decision calling for adequate funding of education and the public with the passage of I-1351 calling for smaller class sizes.

As our agenda noted: "For too long the state government has not sufficiently funded what is supposed to be its paramount duty: public education. As a result, our K-12 public schools have suffered under unacceptable teacher-student ratios, underpaid education professionals, and soaring higher education tuition costs... Our community and technical college faculty have not only been denied COLAs, but also the step pay increases they should earn for professional development and experience. Investing in education at every level, fair pay for teachers, and decreasing the cost of higher education

will invest in our future workforce, create thousands of good jobs, reduce the cycle of debt, and create greater opportunities for workers and families."



Secretary  
Treasurer's Column  
**Lynne Dodson**

In addition, we have a keen interest in ensuring the health and survival of the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at South Seattle College, and the Labor Archives at the University of Washington—our two publicly funded labor programs.

So, what happened?

First the bad news. While both the governor's budget and the House budget included additional funding for LERC and the Labor Archives, the final budget cut additional funding for LERC. Unions have provided LERC resources to supplement its base budget—enough to hire a second labor educator and a part-time support staff. Unfortunately, the new budget provides only enough for the director and one labor educator. It is one in the series of attempts by the Senate Republicans to undermine the labor movement in our

state. Happily, the Labor Archives did receive an additional \$400,000. Therefore, a strong labor education program will require our continued commitment.

There was some good news for public education in this session.

After many long years without, the budget provides a 4.8 percent cost-of-living adjustment over two years for K-12 teachers, community and technical college faculty, technical college classified employees, and K-12 school support staff. Two-year college faculty also finally won what other educators have always had—the right to bargain local funds for professional development and experience (step) increases during the 2015-2017 fiscal biennium.

A small decrease in student tuition was welcome and will help keep the cost of higher education from skyrocketing further. But the 13.8 percent increase in the higher education budget doesn't cover all of the loss from tuition cuts.

The K-12 system's budget was increased a welcome 13.1 percent, but this fell far short of funding the I-1351 class-size reductions sought by voters

beyond grade 3. In final budget negotiations, Senate Democrats were able to force a temporary reform that will allow 2,000 high school students who passed all required courses but couldn't pass a high-stakes biology test to graduate.

It was disappointing that these modest gains took a regular session and three special sessions to accomplish. It was also disappointing that our one statewide Labor Education program was left without adequate resources.

In the end, the Legislature failed to address Washington's ongoing revenue crisis in a meaningful way. We can't properly fund education with our broken tax system (see next page). There were solutions offered this session, including the capital gains tax and closing tax loopholes for big profitable companies, but the Senate majority would not compromise on such long-term fixes.

So we must continue our work—not only to elect legislators who will champion a true Shared Prosperity Agenda, but also to run our own initiatives that properly fund education and improve the lives of people in this state.

## CTC faculty can now seek step increases

*But that right expires in '17*

For years, the hard-working faculty members at our state's Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) have sought the right all other teachers have: to bargain over local funds for step increases in pay. In 2015, thanks to some persuasive bargaining by House Democratic budget negotiators, they finally got it—but only temporarily.

Current law says that only state appropriations can finance such increases. As state funding for higher education has declined and college tuition and fees have increased, these local funds now account for more than half the funding at 21 of 34 CTCs.

It makes no sense to keep local funds off limits for step increases, unless your goal is to suppress already-lagging CTC faculty wages. So, as it has since 2010, AFT Washington supported legislation this year to change that law. HB 1863, sponsored by Rep. Chris Reykdal (D-Olympia), passed the House 64-34 (House Vote #9, Page 5), but Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane) wouldn't even hear, much less vote on the bill in his Senate Commerce and Labor Committee. So it died, again.

But then, House Democrats resurrected Reykdal's proposal during negotiations for the operating budget. In the budget that ultimately passed, a proviso was included to allow CTC faculty to negotiate for step increases using local funds for the 2015-17 biennium.

"This sets the stage for narrowing the 20% salary gap between CTC faculty in Washington and other states, but it is a short-term fix for a bigger problem," notes AFT Washington President Karen Strickland. "State law prohibits bargaining for local funds for salary increases. Unless the law changes, access to local funds will expire in 2017."

That's why AFT Washington and the WSLC will be back in 2016 to urge passage of HB 1863.



*Small business owners declared their support for fully funding the 2015-17 state employee contracts at a "Public Service Matters" press event held at Capitol Florist in Olympia on May 27.*

## State employees finally get raises

Our state employees have made significant sacrifices in recent years. The people who keep our communities safe, care for the elderly and disabled, teach and protect our children, maintain our roads, and provide other essential services have not had a general pay increase in seven years. In fact, for two of those years amid the Great Recession, state workers took 3 percent pay cuts, furloughs and layoffs.

Last year, the unions representing state employees negotiated contracts with the Governor's Office that would grant them their first modest wage increases in seven years—4.8 percent spread over the next two years.

In contrast to his predecessor, who negotiated contracts with raises and then declared them "financial unfeasible" to implement, Gov. Jay Inslee's pre-session budget fully funded the negotiated contracts. So did the budget approved by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.

The Republican-controlled Senate voted 29-20 on April 3 for a budget amendment to fully fund the contracts. But GOP leaders had rigged the game, passing a rule change that required a 30-vote supermajority for any amendment. Republican budget negotiators, led by Sen. Andy Hill (R-Redmond), then held the contracts hostage for the rest of the session and through two overtime sessions, refusing to fund them unless Democrats approved bills weakening state employees' collective bargaining rights (see Page 1 story).

Amid this shameful obstruction and disrespect of state employees, state legislators themselves were awarded 11.2 percent pay raises by an independent commission.

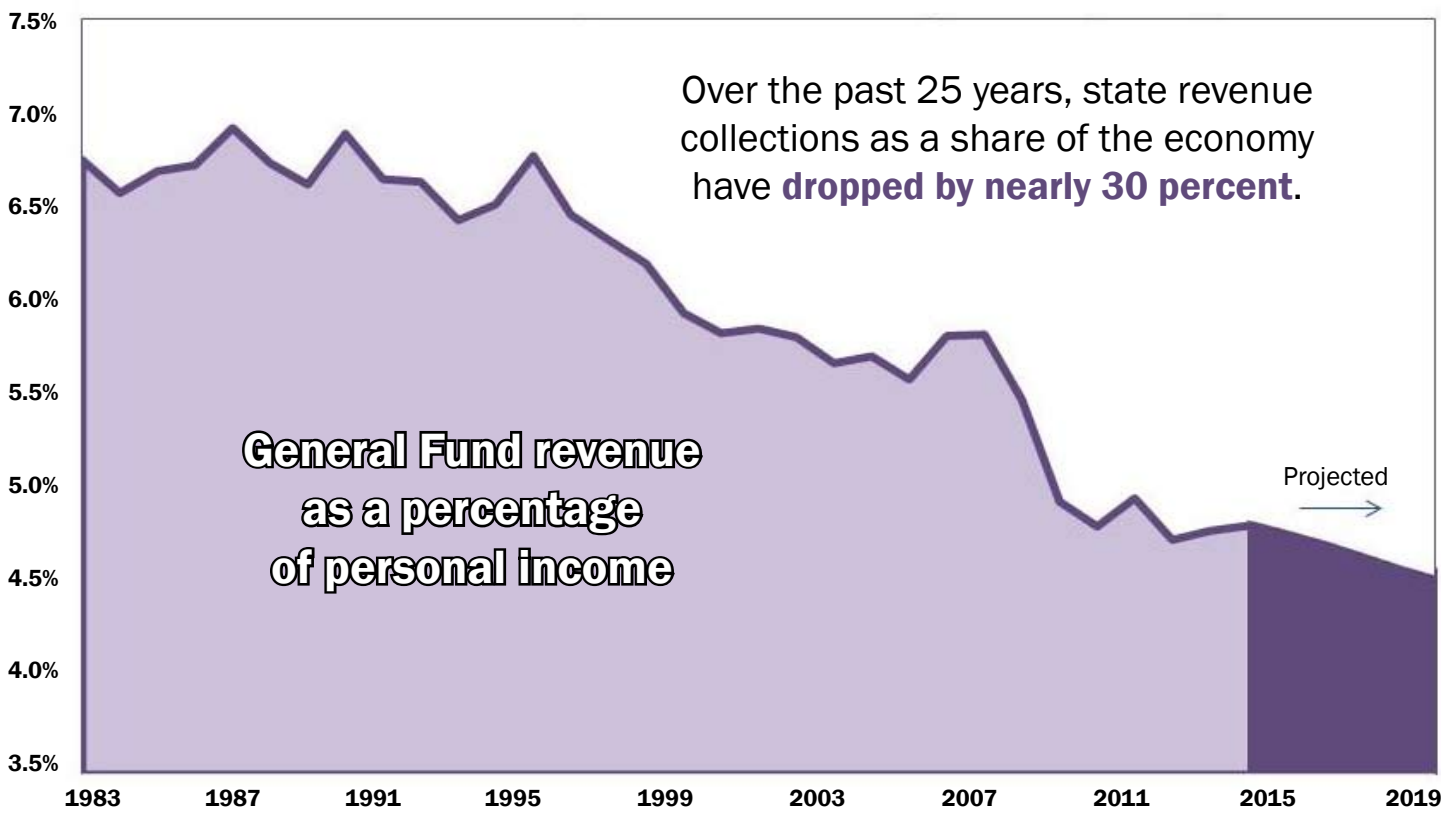
So the unions representing state employees took their case to the community. The WSLC helped coordinate a "Public Service Matters" coalition of the Washington Federation of State

Employees/AFSCME Council 28, Teamsters Local 117, SEIU Health-Care 1199NW, PTE Local 17, AFT Washington, Washington Public Employees Association/UFCW 365, and others. The coalition raised awareness of the important work state employees do and called for community support for full funding of the contracts. The Public Service Matters campaign included actions at the Capitol and in communities across the state, newspaper and radio ads, support from local business owners, and more.

It wasn't until hours before a July 1 shutdown, for which 26,000 state employees had been issued pink-slip warnings, that Sen. Hill and Senate Republican leaders finally agreed to fund the state employee contracts in the 2015-17 operating budget.

About a week later, Gov. Inslee officially signed the contracts granting the long-awaited raises and maintaining health-care benefits.





Source: Washington State Revenue and Economic Forecast Council, October 2014

## Our tax system: Unsustainable, unfair

Conservatives like to point out that state tax receipts—in terms of dollars—have gone up since the Great Recession. So, they say, there’s no need to raise revenue. But that argument ignores Washington’s growing population and businesses that create demand for more state services. The better measure of whether our tax system is sufficient and sustainable is whether revenue as a percentage of state economic activity is stable.

It’s not. In fact, by that measure, state revenue is down by nearly 30 percent over the past 25 years (see chart above).

State budgets passed during and since the Great Recession ignored our broken tax system and cut billions of dollars in funding for infrastructure, schools, colleges, public safety, mental health, and other critical services our families rely on. That’s why legislators found themselves under court order to restore some of that funding this year.

Meanwhile, Washington’s system has become the most unfair tax system in the nation. The wealthiest 1% pay just 2.4% of their total income in state taxes. Middle-class families pay four times that rate, and low-income families pay seven times that rate. Low-wage and middle-class workers pay more than their fair share toward revenue. But big corporations and the wealthiest among us simply aren’t paying *their* fair share.

Five of our state’s biggest industries—aerospace, high-tech, agriculture, timber and mining—combine to contribute just 4% of all the B&O taxes collected last year, while smaller businesses were responsible for paying the rest.

In 2015, House Democrats proposed taking a first step toward making our tax system a little more fair and sustainable with HB 2224, sponsored by Rep. Reuven Carlyle (D-Seattle). It would have the very wealthiest in the state pay a 5% tax on large investment transactions, or capital gains. Washington is one of only nine states with no such tax. HB 2224 also would

The 10 States with the Highest Taxes on the Poor	
State	Taxes Paid by Bottom 20%
Washington	16.8%
Hawaii	13.4%
Illinois	13.2%
Florida	12.9%
Rhode Island	12.5%
Arizona	12.5%
Texas	12.5%
Indiana	12.0%
Pennsylvania	12.0%
Arkansas	11.9%

have closed some tax breaks for large profitable corporations.

House Democrats sought to have these proposals included in the final budget, but Senate Republicans would not budge and steadfastly protected the wealthy and big corporations from having to pay any more to restore funding for schools and other critical services.

But the conversation about improving Washington’s tax system advanced in 2015, thanks to the work of Washington United for Fair Revenue, a statewide grassroots campaign supported by the Washington State Labor Council and more than 100 other community, labor and business organizations. This coalition will continue to fight to update and improve Washington’s tax system.

## Senate kills WA Voting Rights Act

By TERESA MOSQUEDA

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the national Voting Rights Act’s passage in Congress. On this important anniversary, and on the heels of the historic federal ruling in Yakima that demanded the city implement districting to address racially polarized voting, the Washington State Voting Rights Act was introduced in the Legislature for the third year in a row.

Led by sponsor Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Mountlake Terrace), HB 1745/SB 5668 quickly moved through the House with bipartisan support. (See House Vote #5, Page 5.) In the Senate, championed by sponsor Sen. Cyrus Habib (D-Kirkland) and freshman Sen. Pramila Jayapal (D-Seattle), community organizers, unions, and faith groups continued to push until the last day for the WVRA to come to the Senate floor.

But, despite having bipartisan support and the votes necessary to pass the Senate, Republican leaders refused to allow a vote. This marks the third consecutive year the bill has died in the Senate chamber.

The bill has been negotiated, it has been debated, and it deserved a vote in the Senate. The time for waiting or further study is over, as the WSLC told those who wanted to kick the can down the road yet again. For decades, Latinos have been denied an equal opportunity to influence local elections in some areas of the state. Now the majority in many cities and even some counties, Latino representation in local government has not kept up with the changing demographics. These votes deserve to be recognized.

While the 50th anniversary of the national Voting Rights Act is historic, we held back our celebration and kept fighting for the WVRA as we know racially polarized voting continues to this day in Washington state. We will be back, working in coalition next year to pass the WVRA to make every Washington vote count.

## Health Care Is a Human Right movement gains steam in ‘15

By TERESA MOSQUEDA

Health Care Is a Human Right!

That’s more than just a slogan, it’s a movement in our state. Staffed by WSLC and led by community and affiliate partners, the Health Care Is a Human Right Coalition supported intent legislation to cover all Washingtonians by 2020. This effort mimicked the strategy used a decade earlier to cover all kids. In 2005, intent legislation was passed, and in 2007, the policy details were finalized.

While this year’s bill didn’t pass, it succeeded in highlighting the need to improve coverage and access for all, and exposed how many Washingtonians still lack access to comprehensive, affordable or accessible care. HB 1321 (Rep. June Robinson) and SB 5305 (Sen. David Frockt)

put the goals of the Health Care Is a Human Right Coalition on the radar of the Legislature. More than half of the Democrats in each chamber co-sponsored the bills. Through lobbying, testimony, stories and letters, we explained that not everyone has coverage, health care is not affordable for all, families are falling through the cracks, and therefore, we must continue to improve our system.

The effort was supplemented by robust field mobilization via Washington CAN’s canvassing, which signed up more than 18,000 individuals to be part of the Health Care Is a Human Right Coalition. With this power, next year we will be back with these stories in hand and we’ll turn up the volume on the call for health coverage for all Washingtonians.

Hundreds of union film and television crew members staged an apocalyptic film set, complete with zombies, at the Capitol on March 17.

It was an effort to educate lawmakers about the importance of Washington Filmworks, the state’s film incentive that has good job-creation standards and protections. Legislators had a chance to tour a staged set inspired by Z-Nation, a popular series on the SyFy network filmed in Spokane, thanks to Washington’s film incentive program.

(Photo by Heather Weiner)





# House Dems back Shared Prosperity

*Every Democrat supports minimum wage, sick leave*

By TERESA MOSQUEDA

This session, the House of Representatives made substantial progress in promoting shared prosperity in Washington state by passing legislation to increase the state minimum wage and to provide all workers the opportunity to earn paid safe and sick leave.

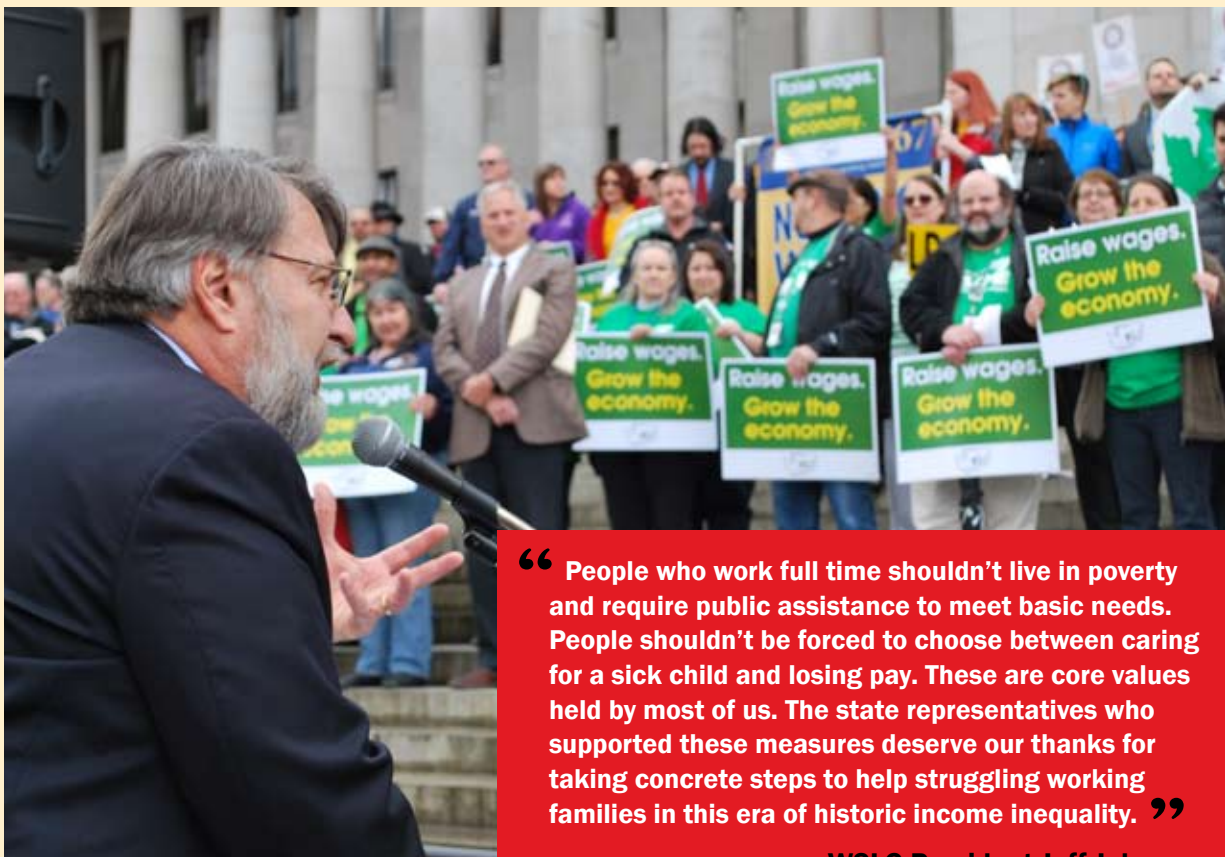
The House advanced a minimum wage increase to \$12/hour, phased in over four years. Sponsored by Rep. Jessyn Farrell (D-Seattle), HB 1355 cleared multiple committee hurdles to reach the floor on March 3 so the people of Washington can see where their representatives stand on the issue. (See House Vote #2, Page 5.) Also that day, the House voted on HB 1356, the Safe and Sick Leave bill sponsored by Rep. Laurie Jenkins (D-Tacoma). (House Vote #3, Page 5.) The bills advanced with every single Democratic member voting for both bills. They then moved to the Republican-controlled Senate, where the bills sat without a hearing for nearly a month.

After a month of lobbying, letters, calls, and public outcry, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee finally held a hearing on them. Its chair, Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane), clearly never wanted to hear them, let alone move the bills out of committee, but public pressure for a fair and balanced hearing could not be silenced or ignored.

The March 30 hearing was a critical opportunity for community and business leaders, workers, and their families to speak to the need for a higher minimum wage and paid sick leave. The proponents, real workers and small business owners, vastly outnumbered the few industry lobbyist opponents.

Baumgartner never considered moving the bills out of committee despite the fact that a 2014 poll showed that 65% of Washington voters support the gradual phase in to \$12/hour, and more than 76% of voters favor requiring all employers to provide sick and safe leave. Neither of these issues should be partisan. Low-wage workers and local economies throughout the state would have benefited from passage of these bills. In the 2014 national elections, voters in several red states passed ballot measures to raise the minimum wage and allow all workers to earn paid sick and safe leave.

Since the Senate didn't approve the modest proposals, the WSLC will be back next year with faster, more proactive timelines for implementation, because working families cannot wait any longer to have an economy that works for all, not just the wealthy few.



**“ People who work full time shouldn't live in poverty and require public assistance to meet basic needs. People shouldn't be forced to choose between caring for a sick child and losing pay. These are core values held by most of us. The state representatives who supported these measures deserve our thanks for taking concrete steps to help struggling working families in this era of historic income inequality. ”**

**— WSLC President Jeff Johnson**

## Wage Theft

All workers, whether they live and work in red or blue areas of the state, believe the same thing: If you work hard and play by the rules, your work should be rewarded. But that isn't true for thousands of workers across Washington who have had their wages stolen by their employers.

Wage theft is a crime and yet it continues to grow. In Washington, if a worker speaks up about wage theft and is retaliated against or fired, there are no administrative protections for the worker. In reality, there are no significant consequences for employers who break the law by retaliating against workers or stealing wages. Because fines are so low and administrative consequences non-existent, wage theft has become a pervasive business model in many industries, including construction, janitorial, retail, service, restaurants, painting, and many more.

For the third straight year, the Stop Wage Theft Coalition and the Shared Prosperity Coalition pushed a package of legislation to address wage theft by:

- Establishing protection from retaliation for reporting wage theft—HB 1354/SB 5569, sponsored by Rep. Cindy Ryu (D-Shoreline) and Sen. Bob Hasegawa (D-Seattle).
- Addressing the misclassification of workers — HB 1519/SB 5566 by Rep. Marcus Riccelli

(D-Spokane) and Sen. David Frockt (D-Seattle).

■ Providing a path to better recover wages owed — HB 1518/SB 5567 by Rep. Mia Gregerson (D-SeaTac) and Sen. Karen Keiser (D-Kent).

■ Increasing penalties for wage theft — HB 1006/SB 5568 by Rep. David Sawyer (D-Tacoma) and Sen. Steve Conway (D-Tacoma).

While the minimum wage and paid sick and safe leave bills passed out of the House, the third leg of the Shared Prosperity stool — protection from retaliation and wage theft — never made it to the House floor for a vote.

The same low-wage workers who would have benefited from an increase in the minimum wage also experience retaliation and wage theft. The same low-wage workers who have no sick or safe leave also experience retaliation and wage theft. Thus, we have our marching orders: we need worker stories and testimony, ongoing education and pressure. Legislators in the House and Senate need to be reminded by workers who experience wage theft that they are in their district, they are their constituents, and they are their friends and neighbors.

The WSLC is calling on lawmakers in 2016 to protect workers from retaliation and stolen wages, and to increase wages and protections for workers across Washington.

## Public Service

*Continued from Page 1*

and distract workers and their unions from negotiating fair wages, benefits, and working conditions. Instead of supporting these workers and recognizing the contributions they made to our state during the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, these Senators chose instead to focus on politically motivated attacks intended to defund unions and disrupt collective bargaining.

These ALEC-inspired bills were designed to inject chaos and instability into union finances and collective bargaining in general:

- SB 5237 required public employers to open bargaining sessions to the public—a requirement not applied to any other negotiation arrangement—and would have allowed anti-union interests to disrupt and politicize bargaining sessions.
- SB 5226 applied overly burdensome financial reporting requirements to public unions.
- SB 5602 made it far more



*Union members are briefed at the WSLC Legislative Lobbying Conference on Feb. 20 before heading to the Capitol to talk to their state legislators.*

difficult for shop stewards and union reps to defend workers' rights in grievance proceedings or attend negotiations.

At their most extreme, so-called “right-to-work” bills were introduced to ban or restrict union-security agreements in public employee contracts—an action wholly in line with the modern Republican Party's water-carrying for the extreme right-wing billionaire class. (See these bills' sponsors on Page 4.)

These bald-faced attempts to under-

mine working people were apparently too much for even the Senate Republican majority, and most failed to get a floor vote. Those that did pass, such as SB 5226 (Senate Vote #4, Page 5), soon died in the House.

Remarkably, this bipartisan lack of support didn't stop Senate budget negotiator Andy Hill (R-Redmond) from holding hostage state employees' first general wage increase in seven years unless Democrats agreed to some of

these collective bargaining attacks. They were rolled into SB 6126 by Sen. John Braun (R-Centralia) and Hill extended his hostage crisis through two overtime sessions before finally giving up as a costly state shutdown loomed.

“Attempts to limit collective bargaining rights for public employees were in play throughout all the sessions this year,” said WSLC President Jeff Johnson. “Senator Braun was relentless in his attempt to accomplish this. His SB 6126 did not pass and failed to get rolled into the operating budget due to the staunch support for public employees by Senate Democrats and also Republicans Pam Roach, Mark Miloscia, Don Benton, Brian Dandel, and Kirk Pearson. Thank you, Senators, for standing up for our hard-working state employees.”

A bipartisan majority of senators saw most of these bills for what they were, a crass, politically motivated attack on working people and their unions. The reckless pursuit of these bills by Hill, Braun and a handful of extremists are a disturbing reminder that the billionaires funding such attacks across the nation have foot soldiers in Olympia.