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2016 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The WSLC's report and voting record from the 2016 session of the Washington State Legislature



ELECTIONS MATTER

BREAK THE LOGJAM IN OLYMPIA

This 2016 Legislative Report of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO describes multiple efforts to make our state a better place to live and work. Unfortunately, partisan political divisions in our state government have blocked most of those efforts.

From holding corporations like Boeing accountable for the tax breaks they get, to funding our public schools and colleges, to making sure our jobs are safe, positive legislative efforts to address critical issues are caught in a logjam. Many pass the Democratic-controlled House and are killed in the Republican-controlled Senate. Similarly, legislative attacks that would lower wages, weaken the safety net for injured workers, and

2016 WSLC Voting Record

This year's official
Legislative Voting
Record — Pages 4-5

make it harder to reform our broken revenue system pass the Senate but die in the House.

Neither party always does the right or wrong thing for working families. But as you'll read in this report, these patterns keeps repeating on issues that working people care about. The end result: Washington D.C.-style politics are blocking progress in our Washington.

But we can't withdraw in cynicism. Organized labor has a long, proud history of proactively advocating for justice and fairness for all workers. So read this report, study what happened in Olympia this year, learn how individual legislators voted, and you'll be reminded why elections matter.

Senate GOP: Put down your shovels

As Molly Ivins used to say, "The first rule of holes: When you're in one, stop digging."

My message to Senate Ways and Means Chairman Andy Hill (R-Redmond) and the Senate Republican majority: "Put down your shovels."

Expectations were low for the 2016 legislative session and these expectations were met.

I'm not saying that nothing good came out of this session. And I'm surely not saying there's no difference between the Democratic-led House and the Republican-led Senate.

I am saying that the partisan gridlock we have suffered through since the Senate came under Republican control has prevented us from dealing with the biggest issues facing our society today: fully funding education, providing critical social services, creating fair voting rights, addressing income inequality and the opportunity gap, rebuilding our infrastructure, creating a fair and adequate revenue structure, and dealing with climate change, to name just a few. Partisan political gridlock has weakened our communities and our democracy.

The gross political attack on Gov. Jay Inslee through the Senate Republican's firing of Secretary of Transportation Lynn Peterson laid bare the stark partisan lens through which they view the world. Secretary Peterson had been universally



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Jeff Johnson

Partisanship supercedes voting rights—again

By ERIC GONZÁLEZ

Taxation without representation. It's a grievance that launched the American revolution, one that prompted the most fundamental tenet of our democracy: that all of us should get a fair vote in who represents us in government. So how did this become a partisan issue?

For the fourth time, Senate Republicans blocked the Washington Voting Rights Act (WVRA) from getting a floor

vote. HB 1745, sponsored by Rep. Luis Moscoso (D-Bothell), passed the House 50-47 on a party-line vote (see House Vote #3). It advanced out of the Senate General Government and Operations Committee with the support of all Democratic members plus Sen. Pam Roach (R-Auburn), and Sen. Don Benton (R-Vancouver), but was blocked by Senate Republican leaders from a floor vote.

The WVRA would give local governments the ability to change their elec-

tion systems—and avoid litigation—to address polarized voting patterns and ensure all voices are represented. The WVRA's notification proviso set a high bar for what is needed to prove there is a need for a change in local voting system, and it protects local governments from frivolous lawsuits.

At-large voting systems are prone to polarized voting patterns, where the

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Time's up: Legislators must fund state's needs

Lawmakers can't avoid revenue debate any longer

By JOE KENDO

Washingtonians have needs. We need quality, well-funded public schools; we need employment policies that provide opportunities to train, work, and raise our families; and we need infrastructure investments that build clean-energy systems and transportation options in preparation for the 2 million additional

people we can expect in our communities by 2040.

These needs are not simply a matter of want. Many are constitutionally required and, shamefully, have been neglected for decades amid crisis budgeting driven by unconstitutional revenue-blocking Tim Eyman initiatives. For more than a decade, 17 state senators have been empowered to veto new revenue proposals. No matter the economic climate—the boomtimes

Supplemental Budget

Conflicting values lead to overtime (again) — Page 8

of the mid-2000s or the depths of the Great Recession—our school children, elders, and patients are held hostage to anti-government extremists in the minority.

Now those chickens have come home to roost. In 2017, the State Legislature must come up with \$3.5 billion to fully—and constitutionally—fund our public schools and satisfy the Supreme Court's *McCleary* decision.

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Put down the shovels

Continued from **Page 1**

praised for her work on the Skagit River replacement bridge and Oso reconstruction work. She was complimented by the Republican chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, Sen. Curtis King (R-Yakima), for her work on the 2015 transportation package. Yet she was insulted and disrespected, as were the hardworking employees at the Washington State Department of Transportation, on the Senate floor as Republicans fired her with no notice and no opportunity to defend herself. Apparently the desire to score some cheap political points overrode Secretary Peterson’s record as well as standards of common decency.

This level of partisanship does not bode well for putting the shovels down. Yet the budgetary day of reckoning is nearly upon us.

Going into the 2017-19 biennial budget cycle, our Legislature will have to ante up \$3.5 billion to satisfy the Supreme Court order to adequately fund K-12 education, plus \$1 billion for mental health services, plus another \$1 billion or so for caseload growth. Talk about holes. “Can you hear me up there?!”

We are in a seriously deep revenue hole that no budgetary tricks or fund sweeps are going to resolve. The Legislature has been digging this hole for a long time, but now it’s time pay up (see Joe Kendo’s revenue article on Page 1). When those negotiations begin, remember that a big part of being an elected official is to “tax and spend” for the good of our state and its residents. The taxing part ought to be done in a way that creates fairness and the spending part is an investment in those common things that benefit us all.



PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

Jeff Johnson

D.C.-STYLE POLITICAL DYSFUNCTION

Senate Republicans’ ambush and firing of state Department of Transportation Secretary Lynn Peterson was shameful partisan politics of the kind normally found in the other Washington.

As *The Seattle Times* pointed out, her firing had little to do with her job performance. It was about blaming her and Gov. Jay Inslee for unpopular I-405 express-toll lanes established with bipartisan support. Cynical partisan politics supplanted common decency as Republican senators voted to fire Peterson with no opportunity to defend herself.

Similarly, Senate Republicans spent \$150,000 on a separate, partisan investigation into mistaken early releases at the Department of Corrections. The governor had already hired independent former U.S. prosecutors to do the same thing and, by all accounts, was and is taking the matter very seriously. Not satisfied with the political damage



PETERSON

done by a Senate committee hearing filled with speculation and accusation, Republicans bought their own investigation (with your money).

It recalls Congressional Republicans’ failed attempts to manufacture White House scandals from mistakes—think IRS audits, Benghazi, Solyndra loans, etc.—by beating the political-blame horse to death rather than working to prevent such problems in the future.

When the Senate Republican “investigation” ran out of money before it was complete, they even floated the idea of having their own partisan political staff finish it. In the editorial, “State Republicans’ Prison Probe is Hopelessly Partisan,” *The Spokesman-Review* said it had “become hopelessly mired in election-year squabbling.”

This partisan nonsense is not just a waste of time, it’s an abuse of power.

How partisan these negotiations are will be determined in large part by the 2016 elections. Given the current state of the economy and the issues being raised in the presidential race, voters are paying attention to what their legislators do -- and what they neglect to do. A quick inventory of issues voters are expressing their interest in include:

- Raising the minimum wage and providing paid sick days;
- Expanding voting rights;
- Opposing trade deals that cause job and income loss;
- Restoring democracy by overturning *Citizens United*;
- Protecting employment standards including prevailing wages and apprenticeship training;
- Enhancing safety and health at the workplace;
- Supporting collective bargaining rights;
- Taxing the polluters and reinvesting carbon revenue in a “just transition” for workers, communities, vulnerable populations, and

creating jobs in the clean energy economy;

- Making sure that those with high incomes and wealth pay their fair share of taxes;
- Investing fully in K-12 public education before considering charter schools;
- Investing in our crumbling infrastructure;
- Building affordable housing; and
- Ending mass incarceration and giving ex-offenders a second chance by “banning the box” and reforming exorbitant legal financial obligations that block the path to re-entry.

Many of these issues are captured in the WSLC Legislative Voting Records for 2015 and 2016, or in this Legislative Report as worthy bills introduced but not passed. These are the types of issues union members and non-members alike are interested in hearing politicians discuss on the campaign trail. Many bills addressing these issues have passed the House over the past two years, but not the Senate.

It’s time to put the shovels down. It’s time to get out of the hole.

Drop in oil prices, diverted dollars harm toxic cleanup efforts

By DARCY NONEMACHER

In 1988, Washington voters passed Initiative 97, a groundbreaking measure that provides resources to clean up and prevent harmful toxic pollution. Known as the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), it is responsible for:

- Cleaning up roughly 6,344 toxic sites across the state;
- Preventing and controlling the release of large amounts of harmful pollution like mercury or PCBs; and
- Providing millions of dollars to local communities to help them weigh in on cleanup decisions and seize pollution prevention opportunities.

The law’s success is rooted in the fact that it provides dedicated funding through the hazardous substance tax, a modest .7% tax on hazardous substances with the largest portion of revenue coming from oil. In addition to cleaning up and preventing pollution, the law creates living-wage jobs; supports pollution reduction in urban and rural areas, including low-income and highly impacted communities; and encourages redevelopment and investment in areas once burdened by pollution.

The recent rapid drop in oil prices and an increasing reliance on MTCA funding in the state budget for unrelated purposes have created the largest fund-

ing shortfall in the law’s history. Since the Legislature adopted the biennial budget in 2015, hazardous substance revenue declined by about \$102 million. To balance the books in 2016, budget writers had the daunting task of closing a roughly \$80 million funding gap.

In December, Gov. Jay Inslee proposed a budget that maintained funding for the programs funded by the tax and provided \$26 million in bonds to keep many cleanup and prevention projects on track. After much debate, the Legislature adopted a final budget that preserved some project funding but also relied on cuts and project delays to address the shortfall. As a result, the state

faces a hiring freeze for environmental programs and a number of cleanup and stormwater infrastructure projects are stalled in communities like Bellingham, Seattle, Everett, and Spokane.

This funding crisis is expected to linger with an even larger shortfall looming in 2017. Broader collaboration between workers, environmental advocates, and local communities could help restore and stabilize funding. With more than 5,700 toxic site cleanups under way or awaiting cleanup and billions of dollars needed for prevention and pollution control projects, we can’t afford to wait.

Darcy Nonemacher is Legislative Director for the Washington Environmental Council.

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State should be health care innovator

By JOE KENDO

The federal Affordable Care Act fundamentally changed the nature of health care in the United States, but the fight for universal quality affordable care is far from over. Millions of Americans are still left out, and many thousands of them are our friends, neighbors, and family members here in Washington.

Sponsored by Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett), HB 1321 established that the public policy goal of our state is to ensure that all Washingtonians have health care coverage by 2020. Why is this important? In 2017, the ACA allows for states to seek a “1332 waiver” to innovate coverage options outside of the current standards set forth by the law, provided that costs do not increase overall, and that more people are covered. That means Washington

has an opportunity to lead the nation in health care innovation. A proposed amendment to HB 1321 would have instructed the state Health Care Authority to seek a 1332 waiver so we could experiment with superior coverage options and set a timeline for developing policy proposals.

HB 1321 passed the House Health Care and Wellness Committee—unfortunately, without the amendment—but failed to pass the full House. It did, however, set up an important conversation with lawmakers about the need to continue the struggle for health care for all. Future legislatures must address those who have been left out of the ACA’s reforms. Using the 1332 waiver would give us the flexibility to build on the progress made by the Obama administration.

Tale of two committees

House labor panel attempts to improve worker protections, Senate seeks to eliminate them

By JOE KENDO

Much of what protects the quality and dignity of work in our society is a direct result of laws and legal protections fought for by generations of trade unionists nationally, and right here in Washington state. For example, prevailing wage laws ensure workers on public contracts get community-based wages and avoid low-quality, poorly crafted public facilities. Protecting the employer-employee relationship in statute ensures safety nets are available when workers are laid off or injured at work.

Every year, there are proposals to strengthen or weaken laws protecting workers’ dignity, and 2016 was no different. The Democratic-controlled House passed two important laws to promote fair wages and quality training, while the Republican Senate sought to weaken protections for Washington’s workers.

PREVAILING WAGE TRAINING—The Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council led an effort to pass HB 2844, sponsored by Rep. Timm Ormsby (D-Spokane). It would have required that public works contractors be trained in prevailing wage standards and compliance to qualify as responsible bidders. This requirement makes sense in the context of other standards that must be met by contractors wishing to engage in public works construction. WS-BCTC activists and Ormsby secured House passage of the bill 50-45 (see House Vote #6). But the bill—and its companion SB 6571 sponsored by Sen. Steve Conway (D-Tacoma)—were killed without a hearing in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee chaired by Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane).

ELECTRICIAN CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY—In a similar vein, the IBEW and Rep. Chris Reykdal (D-Tumwater) championed HB 1590, which would have required completion of a certified training program, like an apprenticeship, prior to engaging in the electrical trade. It passed the House 51-47 (see House Vote #8), but died in Baumgartner’s Senate labor committee without a vote.

The theme of good bills protecting workers and the public dying in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee was a common one. The myopic nature of the committee’s vision for workers’ rights continued this year as several bills were heard that aimed to erode protections for people in the trades, transportation, home care, and public service. Two bills of particular concern which passed off the Senate floor originated from this committee:

DIGITAL PLATFORM EXEMPTION—Sen. Baumgartner’s SB 6289 would have given digital applications a free pass on their obligations to employees, in this case for providing workers’ compensation coverage. It’s another “new economy” effort to sever the employer-employee relationship so app-based companies can dispatch and control their “independent contractors,” giving these companies an unfair competitive advantage over similar employers who play by the rules and provide for this basic safety net. It passed the Senate 31-18 (see Senate Vote #3), but died in the House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee chaired by Rep. Mike Sells (D-Everett).

REDEFINING WORKERS—Similarly, Sen. Baumgartner’s SB 6321 would have made it much easier for companies to misclassify workers as independent contractors to avoid paying workers’ compensation. It passed the Senate 29-20 (see Senate Vote #4), but died in the House Labor Committee.

As you can see, the 2016 session was once again a tale of two chambers on labor priorities. Rep. Sells’ House Labor Committee, including Reps. Ormsby, Mia Gregerson (D-SeaTac) and Jim Moeller (D-Vancouver), passed bills to protect wages and to ensure high construction standards. But Baumgartner’s Senate committee spent its time creating special rules for tech companies and contractors to eschew their responsibilities to workers.



Makini Howell, owner of the Plum Bistro restaurants and food trucks in Seattle, explains her support for Initiative 1433 at the March 5 signature-gathering kickoff event held at the WSLC offices in Seattle.

I-1433 would ‘Raise Up Washington’

Last year on party-line votes, Democrats in the House passed bills to raise Washington’s minimum wage and allow all workers to earn paid sick leave. Despite polls showing an overwhelming majority of voters support these changes in employment standards, Republicans in the Senate killed them.

This year, rather than suffering more obstruction, advocates for these policies, including the Washington State Labor Council, formed Raise Up Washington to take them straight to the voters. Initiative 1433 will raise our hourly minimum wage to \$13.50/hour by 2020 and then adjust it each year for inflation, and also ensure all workers earn one hour of paid sick leave for every 40 hours worked so they can take care of themselves and their family when they’re sick without fear of being fired or losing a day’s wage. As of this writing, volunteers are gathering the 260,000 valid signatures needed to qualify for this fall’s ballot. Again, polls show voters enthusiastically support the measure. Visit www.RaiseUpWA.com for details and updates.

GOP politicizes restroom access

Late last year, the state Human Rights Commission clarified the policy that transgender people can use bathrooms and locker rooms in public buildings consistent with their gender identities. Sensing a political issue, Republicans in Olympia responded with legislation intended to reverse that decision and take a step backwards on civil rights.

“Workers who have transitioned their genders face immense challenges in the workplace,” said WSLC Government Affairs Director Joe Kendo. “They should not also have to worry about getting fired for using the restroom that best fits their gender identity.”

Hundreds of union members unanimously adopted Resolution 30 at the WSLC’s 2015 Convention, which put the council on record as opposing discrimina-

tory healthcare practices against transgendered people. What could be more fundamental to a person’s health and well-being than having safe access to restrooms and other facilities at work?

A host of GOP-sponsored bills sought to reverse this decision, block restroom access and politicize the issue. They included SB 6443/HB 2935 (sponsors: Sen. Doug Ericksen and Rep. Luanne Van Werven), SB 6548/HB 2589 (Sen. Judy Warnick and Rep. Graham Hunt), HB 2782 (Rep. Brad Klippert), and HB 2941 (Rep. Shelly Short).

Only one of the bills came to a vote, Sen. Erickson’s SB 6443, which failed 24-25 after all Senate Democrats and three Republicans voted “no.”

Corrections staff win benefits

SB 6286, sponsored by Sen. Kirk Pearson (R-Monroe) and supported by Teamsters Local 117, extended benefits for Corrections employees who have been assaulted and injured on the job. It passed both houses unanimously (see Senate Vote #5 and House Vote #9) and was signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee. Under the old law, DOC staff assaulted and injured at work would have their benefits cut off after one year. Now those benefits will be extended as long as the assaulted employee is eligible for L&I benefits. SB 6286’s passage recognizes the dangerous work of these men and women who risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

National Guard employee rights

SB 6202, sponsored by Sen. Steve Hobbs (D-Lake Stevens), empowers the state Attorney General to protect the employment rights of National Guard members who are called to active duty if federal officials cannot resolve the matter. SB 6202 passed both houses unanimously and was signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee.

Bills In Brief

The votes that weren't

Lots of bills that have a big 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 and committee votes. Here are some of those bills:



■ **HB 2638—AEROSPACE TAX BREAK ACCOUNTABILITY**—Would have tied Washington's \$8.7 billion aerospace tax incentives, the biggest tax break in U.S. history, to job creation and maintenance. If Boeing employment drops below its level when the tax break was approved in November 2013, the company would receive a smaller tax break.

SPONSOR: Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett)

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. Richard DeBolt (R-Chehalis), Cary Condotta¹ (E. Wenatchee), Brady Walkinshaw (D-Seattle), Noel Frame (D-Seattle), Laurie Jenkins (D-Tacoma), Mike Sells (D-Everett), Steve Bergquist (D-Renton), JD Rossetti (D-Longview), Chris Reykdal (D-Olympia), Jessyn Farrell (D-Seattle), Sharon Tomiko Santos (D-Seattle), Timm Ormsby (D-Spokane), Gerry Pollet (D-Seattle)

* HB 2638 was voted upon in House Finance Committee but failed to advance. **VOTING YES:** Committee Chair Rep. Kristine Lytton (D-Anacortes), Reps. Robinson, Frame, Pollet, Reykdal, Cindy Ryu (D-Shoreline) and Sharon Wylie (D-Vancouver). **VOTING NO:** Reps. Terry Nealey (R-Dayton), Ed Orcutt (R-Kalama), Cary Condotta¹ (R-E. Wenatchee), Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg), Drew Stokesbary (R-Auburn), J.T. Wilcox (R-Yelm), Larry Springer (D-Kirkland) and Brandon Vick (R-Felida).

¹ NOTE: Rep. Cary Condotta co-sponsored the bill, but then voted "no" in committee. Had he voted "yes," it would have advanced.

■ **HB 2932—RESTRICTING NON-COMPETE AGREEMENTS**—Would void any noncompetition agreements with temporary or seasonal employees, with independent contractors, or for employees terminated without just cause or laid off. Would have created a rebuttable presumption that a noncompetition agreement for more than one year or for employees who are not executives is unreasonable and void.

SPONSOR: Rep. Derek Stanford (D-Bothell)

CO-SPONSOR: Reps. Timm Ormsby (D-Spokane)

* HB 2932 advanced out of the House labor committee on a party-line vote. **VOTING YES:** Reps. Mike Sells (D-Everett), Mia Gregerson (D-SeaTac), Jim Moeller (D-Vancouver), and Ormsby. **VOTING NO:** Rep. Matt Manweller (R-Ellensburg). It died without a floor vote.



■ **SB 6410—UNDERMINING PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS**—Freedom Foundation-backed bill to inject instability into the mission of public sector unions, end-running current democratic rules for choosing union representation and forcing repeated union elections.

SPONSOR: Sen. Mike Hewitt (R-Walla Walla)

CO-SPONSOR: Sen. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake)

* SB 6410 advanced from both the Senate Labor and Ways & Means committees. **VOTING YES:** Sens. Barbara Bailey (R-Oak Harbor), Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane), Randi Becker (R-Eatonville), Sharon Brown (R-Kennewick), John Braun (R-Centralia), Bruce Dammeier (R-Puyallup), Mike Hewitt (R-Walla Walla), Andy Hill (R-Redmond), Jim

WSLC Legislative Lobbying Conference



Hundreds of rank-and-file members representing unions from across Washington state became lobbyists for a day at the Washington State Labor Council's Legislative Lobbying Conference on Feb. 12. Participants descended on the State Capitol to meet with their districts' senators and representatives. Above, Sen. Karen Keiser (D-Kent) talks to some union constituents. At right, Rep. Steve Tharinger (D-Sequim) hears about some labor legislation.

Honeyford (R-Sunnyside), Curtis King (R-Yakima), Steve O'Ban (R-University Place), Mike Padden (R-Spokane Valley), Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville), and Warnick. **VOTING NO:** Sens. Andy Billig (D-Spokane), Steve Conway (D-Tacoma), Jeannie Darneille (D-Tacoma), Jim Hargrove (D-Hoquiam), Bob Hasegawa (D-Seattle), Karen Keiser (D-Kent), Sharon Nelson (D-Olympia), Jamie Pedersen (D-Seattle), Kevin Ranker (D-Orcas Island), and Christine Rolfes (D-Bainbridge Island). It died without a floor vote.

■ **SB 6087—RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE BUT...**—Would have raised the state minimum wage over four years to \$12 and granted minimal paid sick leave, BUT it would have pre-empted cities and counties from setting their own higher standards.

SPONSOR: Sen. Steve Hobbs (D-Lake Stevens)

CO-SPONSOR: Sen. Mark Mullet (D-Issaquah)

■ **SB 5509—REDEFINING OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE**—Would redefine occupational disease with a new 4-part test that gives employers near immunity for any illnesses/conditions that can be partially blamed on non-work activities, and dramatically restricting the time frame for filing claims.

SPONSOR: Sen. John Braun (R-Centralia)

CO-SPONSORS: Sens. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane), Ann Rivers (R-La Center), Jan Angel (R-Port Orchard), Barbara Bailey (R-Oak Harbor), Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake), Jim Honeyford (R-Sunnyside), Linda Evans Parlette (R-Wenatchee).



■ **HB 2068—"RIGHT-TO-WORK"**—Making Washington an anti-union "right-to-work" state that bans employers and unions from negotiating union-security agreements that ensure all workers covered

under a contract pay their fair share for representation. Instead, in "right-to-work" states, unions are required to represent workers who pay no dues for free.

SPONSOR: Rep. Matt Shea (R-Spokane Valley), an embarrassment to the State of Washington. Before the 2016 session, he used his status as a state legislator to intervene on behalf of armed occupiers of federal land in Oregon. See www.thestand.org/?p=47824

CO-SPONSORS: Reps. Elizabeth Scott (R-Monroe), David Taylor (R-Moxee), Jesse Young (R-Gig Harbor), Cary Condotta (R-East Wenatchee), and Graham Hunt (R-Orting), who resigned this year after revelations he lied about his military service.

■ **SB 6578—BLOCKING LOCAL WAGE AND EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS**—Blocking local standards to raise the minimum wage and repealing those that already exist in SeaTac, Seattle and Tacoma; blocking ordinances allowing workers to earn paid sick leave and repealing those that already exist in Spokane, Tacoma and elsewhere; and blocking any future efforts by city and county government to lift local standards.

SPONSOR: Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane)

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

* 2015's SB 5332, which would have done the same thing as SB 6578, was sponsored by Braun and Baumgartner, and co-sponsored by Sens. Becker, Rivers, Schoesler, Angel, Warnick, Honeyford and Hewitt.

■ **SB 6579—PRIVATIZING WORKERS' COMP**—Privatizing the state-run workers' compensation system, an idea supported by Big Insurance but overwhelmingly rejected in 2010 by voters in every county in Washington state.

SPONSOR: Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane)

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

* SB 6579 advanced out of the Senate labor committee on a party-line vote. **VOTING YES:** Sens. Baumgartner, Braun, Curtis King (R-Yakima) and Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake). **VOTING NO:** Sens. Bob Hasegawa (D-Seattle), Steve Conway (D-Tacoma) and Karen Keiser (D-Kent). It died without a floor vote.

SENATE

1 SB 6443 (Ericksen)—Repealing the Human Rights Commission rules on **gender-segregated facilities**. “Right” vote: NO (Failed 24-25, Feb. 10)

2 SJR 8211 (Roach)—Amending the Constitution to **require a two-thirds majority vote** of the legislature to raise taxes. “Right” vote: NO (Failed 26-23, Feb. 12)

3 SSB 6289 (Baumgartner)—Addressing the use of a digital platform to employ certain independent contractors. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 31-18, Feb. 16)

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

4 ESB 6321 (Baumgartner)—Addressing certain **exclusions from the definition of worker** under industrial insurance statutes. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 29-20, Feb. 16)

5 SSB 6286 (Pearson)—Concerning reimbursement of correctional employees for offender assaults. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 49-0, Feb. 16)

6 SB 6246 (Lias amendment 670)—Amending the budget to include \$12.7 million in **funding for the child care providers’ collective bargaining agreement**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 25-24, Feb. 26)

7 SB 6246 (Conway amendment 684)—Amending the budget to **strike the proposed merger of the LEOFF1 and TRS1 pension plans**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 25-22, Feb. 26)

8 4SHB 1541 (Santos)— Implementing strategies to close the **Educational Opportunity Gap**, based on the recommendations of the EOG oversight and accountability committee. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 38-10, Mar. 4)

9 E2SSB 6194 (Litzow)—**Funding charter schools** without addressing public accountability issues. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 26-23, Mar. 10)

Senator	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2016 %	LIFE-TIME
Angel	26	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	18
Bailey	10	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	13
Baumgartner	6	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	11
Becker	2	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	12
Benton	17	○	○	○	○	●	○	A	○	○	25	26
Billig	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	99
Braun	20	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	5
Brown	8	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	8
Carlyle	36	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	E	●	75	72
Chase	32	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	98
Cleveland	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	97
Conway	29	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Dammeier	25	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	14
Dansel	7	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	22	14
Darneille	27	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	91
Ericksen	42	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	15

[illegible]

Senator	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2016 %	LIFE- TIME
McCoy	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	94
Miloscia	30	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	44	84
Mullet	5	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	67	69
Nelson	34	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	96
O'Ban	28	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	18
Padden	4	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	8
Parlette	12	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	14
Pearson	39	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	22	16
Pedersen	43	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	78	79
Ranker	40	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	94
Rivers	18	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	15
Roach	31	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	22	38
Rolfes	23	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	90
Schoesler	9	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	12
Sheldon	35	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	22	27
Takko	19	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	89	80
Warnick	13	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	11	12

HOUSE

1 E2SHB 1390 (Goodman)—Reforming state policies on **Legal Financial Obligations** for people convicted of crimes. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 97-0, Feb. 3)

2 ESHB 1646 (Senn)—Enacting the **Equal Pay Opportunity Act** and protecting worker communications about wages and employment opportunities. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 56-41, Feb. 3)

3 E2SHB 1745 (Moscoso)—The Washington Voting Rights Act. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 50-47, Feb. 4)

4 4SHB 1541 (Santos)—Implementing strategies to address the **Educational Opportunity Gap**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 50-47, Feb. 4)

5 HB 2615 (Pollet)—**Improving benefits for full-time faculty and staff** at community and technical colleges. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 50-46, Feb. 12)

6 HB 2844 (Ormsby)— Adding training and prevailing wage standards to **responsible bidder criteria**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 50-45, Feb. 12)

7 SHB 2441 (Kirby)—Restricting the Social Security offset to **disability compensation**. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 53-44, Feb. 16)

8 HB 1590 (Reykdal)—Promoting apprenticeship for specialty electrician certificates of competency.
 “Right” vote: YES (Passed 51-47, Feb. 16)

9 SSB 6286 (Pearson)—Concerning reimbursement of correctional employees for offender assaults. “Right” vote: YES (Passed 97-0, Mar. 2)

10 SB 6149 (Keiser)— Providing reasonable work-place **accommodations for pregnant women.** “Right” vote: YES (Passed 56-41, Mar. 4)

11 E2SSB 6194 (Litzow)— **Funding charter schools** without addressing public accountability issues. “Right” vote: NO (Passed 58-39, Mar. 9)

Representative Dis.											2016 %	LIFE-TIME	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
Appleton	23	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	99
Barkis	2							○	○	●	○	20	20
Bergquist	11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Blake	19	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	90
Buyts	42	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	11
Caldier	26	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	36	24
Chandler	15	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	10
Chopp	43	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	90
Clibborn	41	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	91	82
Cody	34	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	95
Condotta	12	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	13
DeBolt	20	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	15
Dent	13	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	10
Dunshee	44	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	92
Dye	9	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	10
Farrell	46	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Fey	27	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Fitzgibbon	34	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	99
Frame	36	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Goodman	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	96
Gregerson	33	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	97
Griffey	35	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	10
Haler	8	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	24
Hansen	23	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	98
Hargrove	47	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	14
Harmsworth	44	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	14
Harris	17	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	27
Hawkins	12	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	17
Hayes	10	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	22
Hickel	30	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	45	45
Holy	6	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	18	17
Hudgins	11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	95
Hunt	22	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	98
Hurst	31	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	91	72

[illegible]

Representative	Dis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2016 %	LIFE- TIME
Rodne Rossetti	5	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	16
Ryu	19	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Santos	32	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Sawyer	37	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	95
	29	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	91	98
Schmick	9	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	12
Scott	39	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	E	E	○	11	10
Sells	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Senn	41	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	91	97
Shea	4	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	12
Short	7	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	11
Smith	10	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	17
Springer	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	91	78
Stambaugh	25	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	45	33
Stanford	1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Stokesbary	31	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	24
Sullivan	47	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	91	86
Tarleton	36	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Taylor	15	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	10
Tharinger	24	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	91
Van De Wege	24	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	88
Van Werven	42	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	10
Vick	18	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	10
Walkinshaw	43	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	100
Walsh	16	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	36	29
Wilcox	2	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	14
Wilson	17	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	14
Wylie	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	91
Young	26	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	27	23
Zeiger	25	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	18	36

Charters ‘fixed’ while 1.2M kids wait

This session demonstrated once again the disdain that too many of our elected legislators, especially Senate Republicans, have for 1.2 million public school children in Washington state.

In January 2012, Washington’s Supreme Court ruled in *McCleary v. State of Washington* that the State Legislature was failing to fund K-12 education in accordance with the state’s Constitution. Providing for basic education is the state government’s “paramount duty,” but the Supreme Court found its funding to be inadequate.

The court set up a timeline for compliance by 2018, with a decree to the State Legislature to develop a clear path to reach adequate funding. In 2014, the court held the Legislature in contempt for failing to make sufficient progress, but held off fines until after the 2015 session. When lawmakers again failed to make substantial progress, the court

implemented fines of \$100,000 per day.

This year, the Legislature passed SB 6195, a “plan to come up with a plan” that essentially leaves all remaining funding for McCleary until 2017. That would be the last session before schools are supposed to be fully funded to comply with McCleary.

Bad enough, right? No, it gets worse.

The Supreme Court also found that charter schools in Washington are unconstitutional funded out of public moneys. So this year, the few and wealthy charter school supporters pumped \$1.9 million into a last-ditch campaign to get the Legislature to use public funds to “save” unconstitutional charter schools. With SB 6194 (see Senate Vote #9 and House Vote #11), legislators continued the unconstitutional practice of funding charter schools with money diverted from the general fund, the main source of fund-



Secretary
Treasurer's Column
Lynne Dodson

ing for public K-12 schools. The new law funnels the money through lottery funds, thus forcing the Legislature to back fill from general funds or the long line of students hoping for college scholarships gets longer.

This cannot stand.

As Karen Strickland, President of the AFT Washington notes, “Public funds belong in public schools and we object to the ongoing efforts, in spite of a Supreme Court decision, of moneyed interests to siphon funds into charter schools. We stand in solidarity with the Washington Education Association and other public education advocates to put this issue to rest once and for all.”

Elections matter. Our current Legislature not only fails to uphold the Constitution of the state, they blatantly disregard rulings by the state’s highest court and fail millions of public school students across the state.

We have the opportunity to change this in 2016. We cannot let another generation of school children down.



AFT and WEA faculty and representatives who testified for HB 2615 pose with Rep. Drew Hansen (back center).

Part-time positions proliferating as 2-year colleges pursue Walmart model

By LYNNE DODSON

For many working people, Washington’s two-year colleges provide the best chance for continuing education, with academic and professional/technical programs that serve hundreds of thousands of students every year.

Yet, in spite of the clear value the system brings to the state’s economy, persistent low funding has been subsidized by low faculty and staff wages, rising tuition rates, and an over-reliance on the higher tuition costs paid by international students.

In the 1970s, 80 percent of the faculty in the state’s two-year colleges were full time and tenured, 20 percent were part time, primarily hired to teach in specialty areas. Today, nearly 70 percent of the faculty teaching in the two-year colleges are paid from lower part-time salary schedules.

While full-time salaries have declined to just under \$57,000 per year; part-time faculty earn considerably less per course—less than half as much in some colleges. The Walmart Model has been whole-heartedly adopted in our two-year colleges.

The impact on students is substantial. Most part-time faculty have no office hours (most have no

office), are not available for advising, are not listed in college directories, and have little or no job security from quarter to quarter. Hiring practices can be haphazard, and with many classes assigned at the last minute, faculty have little time to prepare.

AFT Washington and the Washington Education Association have addressed part-time faculty issues for years—increasing health care benefits, retirement, job security, and wages. But the system is in a crisis.

AFT-WA and the WEA, in concert with the United Labor Lobby, promoted HB 2615 this session. This modest bill would have commissioned the colleges to address the impact on students of an educational system that relies on an underpaid, insecure workforce. The colleges would have had to plan for increasing the number of full-time faculty, raising wages, and fair and transparent hiring practices. The bill only called for creation of a plan—with no funding, the colleges were off the hook with regard to implementing the changes.

HB 2615 passed the House 50-46 (see House Vote #5), but died in the Senate Higher Education Committee.

Several other higher ed proposals

were not included in the final budget:

- **The technical fix** to provide state funds to support all of the I-732 salary increases at the community and technical colleges was left out of the budget, but the colleges are still obligated to pay faculty the full COLA amount.

- **While HB 2615** passed the House, it did not move in the Senate and funding for converting PT to FT positions was not included in the final budget.

- **State increment funding** continues to go unfunded, so it is good news that the language allowing local bargaining of salary increases for experience and professional development continues throughout this biennium. This means there was no change to the budget authority that allows community and technical college faculty to bargain increments that can be funded through local resources. Without this proviso, colleges could not use local resources and the funding for bargained increases would be contingent on state allocations expressly designated for them.

Once again, attempts to improve the lives of working people in this state, for hundreds of thousands of students and thousands of faculty, were thwarted by a Senate that refuses to adequately fund our public education system.

GOP Senate silences women on Equal Pay

For the second straight year, House Democrats passed important legislation called the Equal Pay Opportunity Act to empower women to make sure they aren’t suffering wage discrimination. And for the second straight year, it was killed without a floor vote in the Republican-controlled Senate.

HB 1646, sponsored by Rep. Tana Senn (D-Mercer Island), would protect workers from retaliation for simply discussing their pay with each other. Today, an employer can require non-disclosure agreements on pay and block women from ever knowing that they are being paid less than men in the same positions. At a time when, on average, women still earn just 79 cents for every dollar men make, this isn’t right.

As it did in 2015, HB 1646 easily passed 56-41 (see House Vote #2). Supporters also agreed to amend the bill to address concerns about administrative enforcement and third-party lawsuits. But in the end, the Senate Republicans wouldn’t allow it out of the labor committee chaired by Sen. Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane). HB 1646’s companion bill, SB 5630, was sponsored by Sen. Annette Cleveland (D-Vancouver).

Pregnant workers not accommodated

SB 6149, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act from Sen. Karen Keiser (D-Kent), would require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers, allowing pregnant women to stay in the workforce without risking their own health or the health of their babies.

Most women can work well into their pregnancies with only minor accommodations, like temporary assignment to light duty, additional food or bathroom breaks, or the ability to carry a water bottle or sit while working.

SB 6149 unanimously passed the Senate early in the session. The bill’s language was then updated in the House to protect more women and to increase flexibility for workers and employers to determine what accommodations work for each situation. SB 6149 passed the House 56-41 (see House Vote #10), but Senate leaders didn’t allow a vote on the amended SB 6149, so it died.

Debtors' prisons must end

By ERIC GONZÁLEZ

Modern-day debtor's prisons exist throughout our nation, including Washington state. A large contributing factor are Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs), which are fees charged to defendants to cover the costs of incarceration, victims' restitution, and discretionary fines intended to recoup court costs.

The average Superior Court LFO is \$2,340. Making matters worse, the LFO interest rate in Washington is 12%—the highest in the nation—and it begins at the time of sentencing. Inevitably, the cost skyrockets and blocks many from their opportunity at a successful reentry.

Barriers ex-offenders face to reentry are already significant. They grapple with limited employment and housing opportunities, and are ineligible for many local and federal public assistance programs. Lacking employment or aid, many then face re-incarceration for failing to pay their court-imposed LFOs.

In Benton County, for example, more than 20 percent of inmates were reportedly there because they couldn't afford to pay their LFOs. Fully 80% of people with LFOs are unable to pay; if they manage to pay, more than half of restitution is kept by the courts, not by victims' families.

The Legislature had the opportunity to reform this inequity by passing HB 1390, sponsored by Rep. Roger Goodman (D-Kirkland). It would have made common-sense reforms for more than 114,000 residents currently bound by LFOs, by removing interest on non-restitution and prioritizing restitution for victims' families, not the courts.

Despite HB 1390's *unanimous* passage in the House (see House Vote #1), Senate Republican leaders wouldn't allow a vote. Their inaction will continue to suppress opportunities for ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate into our society. Senate Republicans should follow the lead of their colleagues in the House and end the systemic institutional injustice—and wasteful spending—on what have essentially become debtors' prisons in Washington state.

In Washington state, we must stop punishing people for being poor!



Rep. Brady Walkinshaw talks to reporters outside Darigold headquarters in Seattle after the dairy cooperative refused to receive petitions urging them to open a dialogue about improving worker safety on dairy farms.

Dairy safety bill stalls in the House

By ERIC GONZÁLEZ

Washington lacks adequate dairy labor safety standards and as a result has contributed to hundreds of injuries, including the recent tragic death of Randy Vasquez, a 27-year-old family man, whose body was found hours after he had drowned in an unmarked manure pit.

A dairy farm worker dies on the job every 16 months, on average, in Washington state. Every day, at least one dairy worker suffers a job injury that's reported to the state. Since 2009, the number of reported injuries has increased from 362 to 438 in 2013. The majority of injuries could have been avoided through basic safety-and-health standards and training, but the Darigold dairy cooperative has ignored the more than 38,000 petition signatures calling on them to engage in a dialogue with farmworker advocates to improve safety.

With the support of the United Farm Workers and the Washington State Labor Council, Rep. Brady Walkinshaw (D-Seattle) sponsored HB 2484 to provide several needed protections, including discouraging retaliation against workers who report hazards, more frequent inspections, improved safety training, and penalties if a serious or willful violation

results in the death of a dairy worker.

The bill passed the House Labor and Workforce Standards Committee chaired by Rep. Mike Sells (D-Everett). Dairy workers continued to press their case for the bill at a hearing before the Appropriations Committee.

"Last year my son-in-law drowned in manure pit," said Alberto Ayala, a longtime Yakima Valley dairy worker. "He was there for seven hours without anyone noticing him. This industry is not prepared to deal with an accident of this kind, and with 11% of the workforce suffering a workplace injury, this is alarming... We need to understand the dangers in this industry and that's why we need the training, inspections and protection against retaliation."

HB 2484 was opposed by the Association of Washington Business, the Washington Farm Bureau and Washington State Dairy Federation. Their lobbyists testified that farms are safe and called the bill "entirely unnecessary."

Unfortunately, the bill stalled in the Appropriations Committee. Given the industry's clear dangers and Darigold's unwillingness to discuss safety improvements, the WSLC will continue to press for such legislation in 2017.

Neighbors deserve fair warning of pesticide drift

By ERIC GONZÁLEZ

Another safety issue faced by farm workers is pesticide drift. This occurs when pesticides are blown beyond their targets and land on people, leaving them with flu-like symptoms and potentially long-term neurological disorders that can put them out of work entirely. A recent study by state Department of Health found that about 75% of farm workers report symptoms from pesticide exposure, and many would not report incidents out of fear of retaliation or not seek medical attention for financial reasons.

Under current law, pesticide applicators must be licensed and follow pesticide labels, many of which warn users to take precaution and avoid human contact, either

directly or through drift. But since 2004, more than 470 cases of pesticide-borne illness have been reported.

HB 2392, sponsored by Rep. Lillian Ortiz-Self (D-Mukilteo), would have modernized notification systems that could help reduce instances of pesticide drift exposure. Under this "Good Neighbor Bill," growers' neighbors would receive a text message or call 24 to 48 hours before pesticides are applied.

HB 2392 did not get the hearing it deserved in this short session. Steps are routinely taken to protect the health and safety of Washington residents, but much more must be done to protect those who plant, nurture and harvest the crops we enjoy.

Voting Rights Act

Continued from Page 1

minority bloc is systematically prevented from effectively participating in local government.

Imagine this scenario: Two people in your town are running for an at-large spot on the City Council, where candidates are elected not by neighborhoods they represent, but by the issues they champion. Let's say 40% of the town thinks oranges should be a priority and 60% favors apples. No candidates running on the oranges platform, who represent 40% of voters in town, have a chance of winning an at-large voting system. That means there is little to no incentive for elected officials to advocate for the needs of the 40%.

Now, replace oranges and apples for policies such as public safety, access to community centers and neighborhood parks, helping close the educational opportunity gap, investment in basic infrastructure projects, safe routes to school, economic development...

the list goes on. This issue is real and this inequity isn't resolved by choosing better candidates to run, it's about ensuring our democracy is set up to be representative of all of the people and not just a select few.

We saw this type of inequity in Yakima go unaddressed until a federal lawsuit and expensive litigation forced the city to change its election system. Immediately, communities of color and low-income voters elected the first Latinos (or, in this case, Latinas) ever to serve in the city council. Other cities are facing similar litigation but are blocked by the state from reforming their election systems on their own to address

such concerns.

Senate Republicans must stop blocking the fix and stop protecting antiquated voting systems that promote taxation without representation. Our communities should be empowered to invite everyone to have a seat at the table and engage in a meaningful democracy that allows everyone to prosper, not just the privileged few. Our state must put this issue to rest and end systemic, oppressive barriers to opportunity by passing the WVRA and restoring our civil rights.

GOP's counterproductive alternatives

As Republicans in both chambers opposed the Washington Voting Rights Act, they introduced bills that would allow local governments to switch from at-large to district-based election systems. The problem? These "districting-only" bills favored incumbents in the transition and provided zero accountability in the districting process. More importantly, the bills did nothing to address polarized voting. This would result in greater harm than benefit.

Supplemental budget reflects values

“Don’t tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I’ll tell *you* what you value.”— Joe Biden

Lawmakers in both parties will tell you that they care about schools, jobs and the quality of life here in Washington state. Take a look at this year’s supplemental budget proposals offered by the governor, House Democrats and Senate Republicans and you’ll find out *which* schools, *what kind* of jobs, and *whose* quality of life they really value.

GOV. JAY INSLEE—Inslee’s “modest, responsible adjustments” for the biennial budget in 2016 included funding for wildfires (2015 was a record year), boosted staffing and resources at mental health facilities, and addressed the teacher shortage by raising the minimum salary for beginning teachers from about \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year and giving all other teachers a 1% raise. To pay for it, the governor proposed eliminating four outdated tax breaks.

Inslee’s plan earned positive reviews from front-

line state workers and their unions. The Washington Federation of State Employees/AFSCME Council 28 said Inslee’s plan “makes vital public services and the workload of public employees a top priority.” The Washington Education Association called it a “reasonable first step toward restoring professional pay and respect to our state’s educators.”

HOUSE DEMOCRATS—Budget writers for the Democrats who control the House of Representatives echoed many of Inslee’s priorities on addressing the teacher shortage and wildfires. It also prioritized funding for mental health and the homeless, identifying six “costly, outdated” tax breaks for repeal to help pay for the plan.

SENATE REPUBLICANS—The Republicans who control the Senate, led by Sen. Andy Hill (R-Redmond), proposed a budget that did not close any tax loopholes or include any money to address the teacher shortage at public schools, which serve

more than 1.1 million kids. Instead, the GOP plan sought emergency funding to keep unconstitutional private charter schools open for about 1,100 students (see story on Page 6). They also proposed a surprise merger of the firefighters and police officers’ LEOFF 1 pension plan with another closed, but insufficiently funded plan, retired teachers’ TRS 1. Our state’s first responders flooded the Capitol to express their unhappiness with the proposal and it was abandoned.

Senate Republicans also, for the first time in our state, proposed *not* to fund a negotiated collective bargaining agreement. It would have simply ignored the \$13 million for the Family Child Care Providers’ CBA (SEIU 925).

The final budget agreement, which once again required a special overtime session to reach, ultimately funded the child care providers’ CBA and provided some funding for wildfires and mental health. But it also raided lottery funds to pay for charter schools.

Revenue

Continued from Page 1

They also face nearly \$1 billion in obligations to our mental health system, and likely another \$1 billion in population and inflation-based increases to current program caseloads. That’s why **we must demand action on new, adequate, and fair revenue to support our schools, hospitals, and other public services.**

But we are working with one hand tied behind our back. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy reports that Washington families suffer under the most regressive tax structure in the nation, mostly due to our over-reliance on sales taxes. Low-income families pay much more of their income in state taxes (16.8%) and the wealthy pay very little (2.4%). As the state population grows and income inequality worsens, addressing our needs gets further from reach.

Contrary to certain taxation narratives, our collective tax responsibility to the state, when accounting for inflation, has decreased dramatically since 1995. We pay nearly 25% less in taxes to Olympia than we did 20 years ago. This decline in revenue results in higher college tuition, unacceptably low access to mental health services, reductions in public health investments, and fewer dollars available to invest in 21st century energy networks. We are benefiting today from investments made decades ago, yet are failing to pay it forward for our children and grandchildren.

Instead, we acquiesce to cycle after cycle of crisis budgeting. We raid segregated accounts meant for local government infrastructure and environmental cleanup, and we push more obligations on to local governments, but fail to equip them with the fiscal tools necessary to deliver expected outcomes.

Not every state faces these problems. A Department of Revenue analysis found that if Idaho’s tax code (a mix of income and sales taxes) were adopted here, we would have \$10.2 billion more per two-year budget cycle. Oregon’s model (income taxes, but no sales taxes), would net us an extra \$9.6 billion.

For more than 20 years, we have decimated our ability to finance the programs that make our state a great place to live, work, and play. Lawmakers have nickel-and-dimed our revenue structure by adopting tax breaks without regard for long-term fiscal impacts.

Tax preferences can be used to affect social good, but they



Rep. June Robinson speaks alongside IAM District 751 President Jon Holden at an aerospace accountability event.

must be balanced against the cost to the public services. For example, in 2006 legislators created the Motion Picture Competitiveness program, which supports thousands of family-wage jobs. It requires that film production companies prove that local hire, wage levels, benefits, and local purchase thresholds have been met prior to receiving their tax break. This program’s cost is capped per year and it ensures that quality jobs are created in lieu of the lost tax revenue. This is the lens through which other tax preferences should be judged.

In contrast, lawmakers have also adopted preferential tax rates for big out-of-state banks’ real estate holdings, and have given aerospace corporations historic tax breaks without requiring job creation (or even maintenance) metrics to ensure a return on our investment.

Several legislators have crafted visions for just tax policy, accountability measures, loophole closures, and new sources of revenue to buoy our public budgets and ensure sufficient revenue to meet our communities’ needs. Policies like these would help ensure sufficient, fair, and stable revenue:

Aerospace Tax Break Accountability

HB 2638, sponsored by Rep. June Robinson (D-Everett), would have tied job accountability to the historic tax breaks passed in a 2013 special session

for aerospace firms. Since those preferences were made law, more than 4,000 aerospace jobs have left Washington for states that do demand jobs in exchange for special tax treatment. Robinson’s bill failed to get enough votes to move out of the House Finance Committee, but it provided a brilliant vision for job-creating industrial tax policy. Washingtonians must get guaranteed results in exchange for desperately needed but forgone revenue. All corporate tax preferences should meet this important bar.

The good news: thanks to diligent advocacy by Machinists Union District Lodge 751 and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace/IPFTE 2001, the issue has gained momentum. On April 14, *The (Everett) Herald* reported, “A consensus is growing the Boeing tax breaks need teeth.”

Closing tax loopholes

Not every tax preference is counterproductive and not every one is productive. Passage of bills like these would help promote fairness in our tax code:

■ HB 2990 by Rep. Strom Peterson (D-Edmonds) would have ensured that large oil companies would not take advantage of a fuel tax break meant for pulp and paper manufacturers.

■ HB 2991 by Rep. Jessyn Farrell (D-Seattle) would’ve closed a loophole for giant banks on their real estate profits.

■ HB 2992 by Rep. Noel Frame (D-Seattle) narrowed tax breaks on the pur-

chase of private jets.

■ HB 2993 by Rep. Marcus Riccelli (D-Spokane) repealed B&O tax breaks for international banking facilities.

These tax breaks do not create jobs and are not worth the foregone revenue.

Taxing capital gains

The Washington State Budget and Policy Center reports that taxing capital gains would go a long way toward properly funding our public schools. Nearly \$750 million a year could be generated from a capital gains tax that would only be paid by the wealthiest 1.7%. Recent proposals exempt the sale of primary homes and the first \$50,000 in investment income to accommodate retired elders and middle-class families.

It’s easy to blame elected officials for this state of affairs. We expect our elected leaders to be courageous and do the right thing, but courageous legislators without the support of voters can become courageous *former* legislators.

We cannot address these challenges without a major overhaul of our revenue system. That won’t happen unless we support legislators willing to do the right thing—especially when the monied corporate interests come out swinging at election time. We also must have mature conversations about the need for revenue reform. The longer we wait, the more damage is done and the further we must climb to get out of this hole.