

SENATOR

Fred Jarrett

41st Legislative District

Friends and neighbors,

Recently the Legislature wrapped up its busy 105 day session and there's much to report. In this newsletter I'll tell you about some significant advances we made in education and transportation and fill you in on how some of our 41st District priorities fared.

But I want to start by impressing upon you just how difficult this session was. Due to a recession-fueled budget shortfall of historic proportions, we were forced to make painful choices that will affect thousands of people in our district and across this state.

Ultimately, the budget problem we faced reached \$9 billion, or about a quarter of our entire operating budget. Options for cutting the budget were somewhat limited because the state is legally obligated to fully fund basic education and make payments to retire construction debt.

In round numbers, the Legislature closed the budget gap using \$3 billion in federal stimulus money and got close to \$2 billion from fund shifts (resulting in a smaller construction budget), public employee compensation reductions and reserves. But the single largest component to our solution was making \$4 billion in deep cuts to state services. For example, 40,000 among the working poor will lose their subsidized health insurance, 9,000 seats in state colleges and universities will disappear and about 8,000 public employees (including teachers) will lose their jobs.

We voted to increase state college and university tuition by unusually high levels — 14 percent at Washington State University and the University of Washington, for example — slashed funding for local health districts and called for closing one prison and one juvenile rehabilitation facility. The fact that cuts to individual school districts will average only 2.6 percent qualified as good news. Virtually every functional component of state government took a hit.

I have to say that I didn't run for this office intent on eliminating services so valued in our communities. But I did run to make tough decisions when the times call for it. And this is one of those times.

The best thing I can say about the budget we adopted is that it is responsible. We focused on programs that will prevent additional costs from plaguing us later and will position our state to rebound with the economy.

In the end we did what we said we'd do from day one. We went line by line and built a budget we can govern on for the next two years. And we did it without even asking voters to raise taxes.

More tough decisions lie ahead and I very much encourage you to contact my office if you have questions or concerns.



How to contact me:

409 Legislative Building
PO Box 40441
Olympia, WA 98504-0441
(360) 786-7641
Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000,
1-800-635-9993 (TTY)
jarrett.fred@leg.wa.gov
www.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/
senators/jarrett

Standing Committees:

- Higher Education and Workforce Development, Vice Chair
- Early Learning and K-12 Education
- Transportation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred Jarrett". The signature is stylized and written over a light blue background.

Senator Fred Jarrett
41st Legislative District

Sweeping education reforms gain approval

Against the backdrop of a very difficult budget situation, the Legislature managed to craft a new funding blueprint for the state's K-12 education system to replace the outdated relic in place for over three decades.

At issue is the state's commitment to fully funding basic education, outlined in the state constitution as its "paramount duty." We've been falling short for years.

In 2007 the Legislature created the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance to review the state's definition of basic education and formulas for funding it and suggest changes to both.

I had the good fortune to sit on the task force, made up of legislators and key stakeholders from throughout the education community. We spent 18 months drawing up what a modern day educational system should look like. Much of what we recommended ended up making it into House Bill 2261. Key determinations included the following:

- The definition of basic education will be expanded to include all-day kindergarten, transportation to and from school, expanded instructional time from 1,000 hours per year to 1,080 and the opportunity to complete 24 credits before high school graduation.
- Core funding formulas will be rewritten to follow a prototypical schools model, describing what a typical school should look like; how many kids in a class, if there are librarians, counselors or nurses, and how much would be provided for utilities, technology and maintenance. This transparent funding formula will be easy to understand and help hold the



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Legislature accountable for its paramount duty.

- A new system to receive and analyze detailed data from schools across the state will be created to identify critical research and policy questions, analyze new funding models and identify shortcomings throughout the educational system.

The Professional Educator Standards Board will be required to set new teacher performance standards and recommend changes to teacher certification requirements.

There's much work to do to implement all this. The state Board of Education, for instance, must complete work on a new graduation standard and

the new teacher certification standards will have to be drawn up. A financing work group will design in detail what our prototypical school looks like. Other groups will be examining issues related to local school levies, early learning programs for at-risk students, new funding formulas and how all of these changes will be phased in.

The Legislature will be charged with coming up for the money to pay for all this in time to be implemented by 2018. This was a key question as this year's bill was being debated and it is perfectly understandable. Some wondered how we could chart out such an aggressive path in a year when we're forced to slash budgets.

But as it turns out, this may be the best time to perform this exercise. It is critical to first define where it is you want to go. We've done that. And as our state grows out of this recession there will be an opportunity to reshape our government and redefine our priorities. With this plan in place, education will be well positioned to capitalize on this economic growth.

As a former mayor and school board member, I can't tell you how many visioning processes I've taken part in. Needless to say, it's been a lot.

But this year I can report that we've done something worthwhile. We've built the foundation for a new education system that, once operational, will open a new era of competitiveness for our kids. We've changed the fundamental thinking behind our K-12 education system, asking ourselves first what it is we want our kids to know instead of how much money we want to spend.

And after 30 years, I'd say it's about time.

A banner year for transportation

Though there are continued challenges on the horizon, 2009 is shaping up to be a watershed year for transportation priorities in Washington.

For starters, it's going to be a record construction season, thanks in large part to transportation investment packages approved by the Legislature—and in one case reaffirmed by voters—earlier this decade. This comes at a time when the economy could sorely benefit from the jobs that will be created.

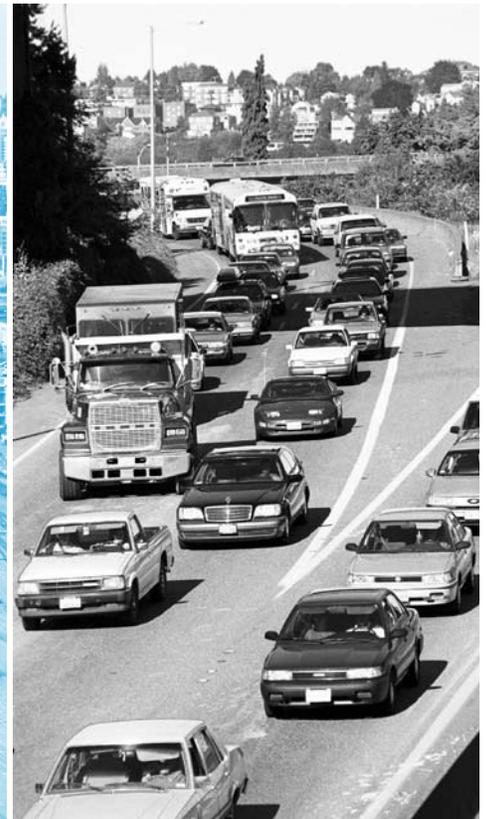
All this activity may lead to short term inconveniences for motorists. But it will produce long term gains for our economy and quality of life.

Additionally, the Legislature this year took action on two Puget Sound megaprojects, continuing momentum for both.

For starters, we approved legislation that will allow for early tolling to support the replacement of the 520 bridge over Lake Washington. What's more, we authorized the commencement of pontoon construction for the new bridge at sites in Tacoma and Grays Harbor County. This was critical because the pontoons require a long lead time to construct.

All this helps us take another notable step in our methodical march toward replacing the 43-year-old 520 bridge.

The Legislature also approved plans for a deep-bored tunnel to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Our transportation budget met the state's commitment to invest \$2.4 billion in the project while also authorizing \$400 million in tolling revenue to support the megaproject.



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This was a significant decision and, finally, the right one. By supporting the tunnel option we've embraced a solution that will have minimal impact on motorists and businesses in the area and will produce more predictable construction timelines.

What's more, we're going to open up one of the most beautiful waterfronts you'll find on the continent for all to enjoy.

This year the Legislature also underscored its commitment to public

transportation. The final transportation budget included money for paratransit and special needs grants, rural mobility grants and a grant program to support vanpools.

Further, I successfully amended the Senate's version of the transportation budget to include language reaffirming the state's commitment to build the I-90 HOV project. This project will add two lanes to replace the ones East Link will take up. This is sometimes referred to as R8A.

Bellevue College, Newcastle win big in Olympia

While most of the focus this year was rightly fixed on balancing the operating budget, the separate capital and transportation budgets funded key projects for the 41st District. These projects not only enrich our communities but they'll provide needed jobs to bolster our recession-weary economy.

Bellevue College, formerly Bellevue Community College, secured \$4.4 million to support construction of a new Health Science Building. This is a key project on a campus that is home to what has been proven to be one of the most innovative workforce training schools you'll find. This particular facility will expand the college's ability to train more nurses and other health care occupations for which demand is soaring.

It should be noted that this represents just one more step for the school as it continues its expansion.

With more than 34,000 students, the college is the state's third largest higher education institution behind only Washington State University and the University of Washington.

The school is awarding its first four-year degrees this year following the creation of its radiation and imaging sciences program in 2007. What's more, the Legislature this session included language in the state's operating budget authorizing the school to begin its second four-year program, this one in environmental landscaping.

The transportation budget includes \$3 million to finish the multi-year expansion of the Coal Creek Parkway between Renton and Bellevue. The segment through Newcastle is the last to be widened to four lanes and is being completed largely due to the perseverance of the city of Newcastle, which pressed on in the face of



Sen. Jarrett meeting with Governor Gregoire

escalating construction costs.

In addition, the capital budget includes \$1.6 million for the Coal Creek YMCA in Newcastle. The \$20 million facility is slated to open this fall.

These were all worthy projects that managed to get funding in a very difficult budget environment.

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Senator Fred Jarrett
PO Box 40441
Olympia, WA 98504-0441

