

# Senator Derek Kilmer

Dear Neighbors,

Many of us, our family and our friends continue to face tough times and so does our state. Once again this year, the Legislature focused on closing a substantial budget shortfall. I worked for a budget that met several requirements.

First, the budget was **bipartisan**. Though it took a while to get there, the Legislature came together – Democrats and Republicans – and passed a budget from the Senate with near unanimous support.

Second, I worked for a budget that was **balanced**. Just like every family and every business, the state has to live within its means. Though the governor had proposed a sales tax increase, the final budget didn't raise the sales tax.

Third, I worked for a budget that **focused on core priorities**. In recent years, the state has cut over \$10 billion in budgeted expenditures. With additional cuts this year, I pushed for a focus on educating our kids, protecting our most vulnerable citizens, and preserving public safety. I'm particularly pleased that there were **no cuts made to education**.

Fourth, I worked for a **reform-oriented** budget. I sponsored several bills this year to enact recommendations from our state auditor to make government more efficient.

And finally, I worked for a budget that **focused on jobs**. The long-term budget challenges facing our state will only improve when our small businesses can start hiring again. That's why the budget included tax relief for several industries and targeted infrastructure investments that will drive job creation in our state.

In this update, you'll find a common theme: my job is to work for you. Whether it's trying to reduce tolls on the Narrows Bridge, addressing the concerns of military families in our communities, or helping local businesses succeed, many of these ideas and solutions were inspired by you.

If you have other ideas or a question, call my office or send an email. And if you'd like to stay up-to-date on what's happening in the Legislature and our district, please sign up for my periodic email newsletter.

I look forward to hearing from you and am honored to serve you.



Derek Kilmer  
State Senator, 26th Legislative District



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**Standing Committees:**

- Ways & Means, Vice-Chair
- Higher Education & Workforce Development
- Economic Development, Trade & Innovation
- Joint Committee on Veterans' & Military Affairs

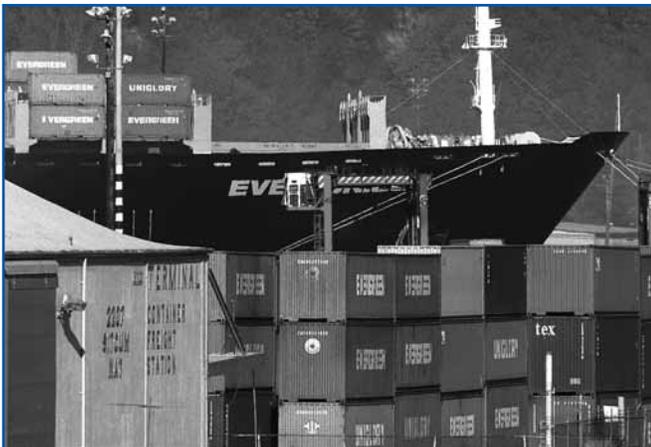
## Rebuilding our economy, one job at a time

As vice president of the Economic Development Board, my primary focus is job creation. It's my top priority in the Legislature, too. We need to help Washingtonians get back to work. This session we passed several bills aimed at removing barriers to business growth, offering workers the training they need to find jobs, and encouraging innovation.

### Making strategic investments

As the Senate's lead capital budget writer, I worked on a bipartisan proposal to make some smart investments now, when labor and materials costs and interest rates are low. These investments are ready-to-go and, it is projected, will put 18,000 folks to work in the construction industry (where unemployment surpasses 30 percent) as well as drive long-term private sector economic growth.

The bipartisan jobs bill makes critical investments in our neck of the woods – Bay Street improvements in Port Orchard, removal of asbestos water pipes and expansion of the Cushman Trail in Gig Harbor, and investments to support the economic development efforts of the Port of Bremerton and the Port of Tacoma.



The proposal also makes strategic investments in educational facilities like skill centers and community colleges.

For example, Tacoma Community College has long waiting lists for its health care training programs. There are jobs waiting for graduates as radiology technicians, respiratory therapy specialists, health information managers and other health professionals. The bill invests in building additional classroom space that will increase TCC's production of trained health graduates by 50 percent.

### Helping local small businesses

Much of my work has focused on helping small businesses. For example, this fall, I met with a local family-owned business that faced a whole new set of regulatory challenges due to a court ruling. Because of the uncertainty the ruling created, the company eliminated 50 jobs.

I sponsored a bill harmonizing state rules regarding these types of businesses with Federal Trade Commission regulations. The result? The bill received unanimous support. Now, the company plans to restore its local workforce as well as add new positions – resulting in 80 new jobs for our state. By targeting and tackling the barriers our businesses face, we keep Washington's competitive edge and encourage a healthier economy for us all.

### Promoting workforce training

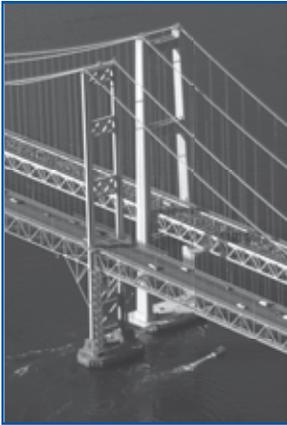
To improve our state's competitiveness, we need to ensure that we have a well-skilled workforce. Toward that end, I'm pleased that this year's budget avoided cuts to our K-12 schools, colleges and universities. In addition, the budget included important funding to double the size of the new four-year engineering program at Olympic College. That's great news for private industry in our area and for the shipyard.

Additionally, this year we passed a law that I sponsored to create Lifelong Learning Accounts. These accounts are like 401-K's for workforce development – employee-owned savings accounts that help employees and employers cover education and training expenses. The concept has been successfully piloted by the Association of Washington Business Institute and the state's Workforce Training Board. It's not a new government program but rather a way to enable financial institutions and nonprofits to offer an entirely voluntary way to help folks upgrade their skills, enabling them to improve their pay or find a new job.

## Holding down Narrows Bridge toll increases

For families and businesses who rely on the Narrows Bridge every day, increases in tolls are a heavy burden. As someone who crosses the bridge daily, I don't want tolls to go up any sooner or any greater than is absolutely necessary.

With that in mind, I partnered with Rep. Larry Seaquist to pass a law that will enable bridge users to avoid paying



nearly \$6 million in sales tax payments this year – and each year for five years thereafter. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge Citizen Advisory Committee estimated the move will save commuters 50 cents per crossing.

I've always felt asking a driver to pay a toll to pay a tax is ridiculous, but that is how the bridge's original financing plan

(which went into place before I took office) works. That plan delayed sales tax on construction until this year, and anticipated increasing debt service payments every few years. Those factors, in addition to lower traffic volumes and new requirements from the state treasurer, are driving the State Transportation Commission to propose a toll increase.

I'd prefer to see bridge users be exempt from paying sales tax on the bridge's construction altogether. But the bill we passed this year will at least give families in our communities some relief.

### Preserving ferry service

The transportation budget approved by the Legislature was a win for the West Sound, providing funding to maintain service levels and begin construction of a second 144-car ferry – key to keeping service disruptions to a minimum in the future. The budget also continues work on road improvement projects statewide.

## Making government more efficient

When budgets are tight for families, businesses and the state, we must do everything possible to ensure our tax dollars are spent wisely.

### School construction

It's common sense to ensure the state invests in building classroom space only for students who will actually show up. A bill I sponsored this year will end spending on new classroom space for online, out-of-district students.

Recently, the State Auditor's Office pointed out that the state's school construction funding formula doesn't distinguish between students who sit in classrooms and students who participate in alternative learning experience (A.L.E.) programs such as online learning from home. The state pays its share of construction costs as if every A.L.E. student uses the district's buildings.

Under my bill, the state's funding formula will provide construction assistance money based on the number of students physically present, and will not count A.L.E. students from other districts in that formula. It's expected to save \$13 million in school construction money this year alone.

### Getting the most for our universities

In a variety of areas – from workers' compensation to state employee pensions – the state invests funds prudently and earns a good return through the professionally-managed State Investment Board.

But due to some out-of-date rules, the University of Washington and Washington State University are limited to investing their funds in government securities that don't offer the returns of a more diversified portfolio. I sponsored bipartisan legislation that will allow our research institutions to make maximum use of their funds – and spare students some of the burden caused by tight state budgets – by allowing the universities to participate in the State Investment Board's program and reap higher returns. This reform received bipartisan support in the Legislature and will be on your ballot in November as a proposed amendment to the State Constitution.

## Supporting military families

Last year, a soldier from Joint Base Lewis-McChord told me her family had been transferred from the South, and her husband was having difficulty getting licensed in his profession here in Washington. She asked if we could do something to help military spouses who are licensed nurses, truck drivers or other professionals.

Her family wasn't alone. Of the 43,000 spouses of service men and women in Washington, a third of them work in jobs that require a professional license. And the unemployment rate for military spouses surpasses 20 percent, according to information provided by the Department of Defense.

As a result of that conversation, I drafted and the Legislature approved two measures aimed at helping military spouses in Washington find and keep jobs.

First, the state will offer military spouses transferred to our state a temporary professional license and an expedited path to a permanent license. This applies to a multitude of professions ranging from massage therapists and architects to nurses and teachers.

Second, for Washington military spouses who are deployed or placed out of state with their families, the state will allow them to keep their occupational licenses (placing them on inactive status) during deployment and to reactivate easily when they return to the state.

Military families are important to our communities and our state – they've already sacrificed for us. We must continue to do all we can to support them.

