

CREATING A LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE BUDGET



Near the end of the regular session, the Senate had yet to adopt a supplemental budget plan. The only option on the table was from the House of Representatives; it was balanced artificially for the current budget cycle by cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from school funding and would have created a \$2 billion deficit next year that threatened to devastate more programs.

With that in mind, a bipartisan coalition of senators, including me, presented two budget proposals. The first was an attempt to lay out the framework and priorities of a plan and begin negotiations with the House.

The second proposal included several revisions; one of them protected education funding, which is of paramount importance to me.

The final result was a sustainable plan that balances the budget now and in the future. Our proposal included necessary reforms that could save the state money in the long run by fundamentally changing the way it does business.

Eventually both the Senate and the House were able to reach a reasonable compromise that incorporates much of what I worked to keep intact in both budget proposals.

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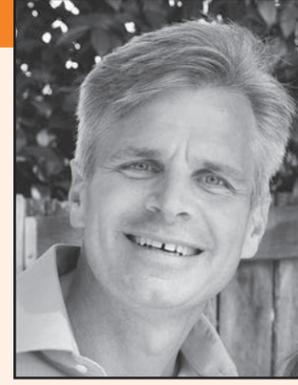
Sen. Steve Litzow 2012 Legislative Session Report

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Senator **Steve Litzow**

41st Legislative District



2012 Legislative Session Report: Bipartisan Success

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

My focus this session was to ensure that lawmakers looked into the future by adopting a long-term sustainable budget that enables the state to operate more efficiently and prioritizes education spending.

Because the Senate and House of Representatives proposed significantly different ways to rewrite the budget, the Legislature needed extra time to negotiate.

On April 11, both the Senate and the House agreed on a series of breakthrough reform measures and a supplemental spending plan that utilizes responsible budgeting practices by not spending more money than the state brings in. The ultimate compromise would not have been possible if not for a bipartisan coalition in the Senate that put forward a responsible future spending proposal.

In addition to the budgeting process I am also very proud of some of what was accomplished in terms of policy changes. I was particularly involved in the passage of the teacher-evaluation and marriage-equality bills that are discussed later in this report.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you in the Washington State Senate.

Sincerely,

Steve Litzow
State Senator, 41st Legislative District

*Serving Bellevue, Beaux Arts, Issaquah, Mercer Island,
Newcastle and Renton*

A GREAT TEACHER IN EVERY CLASSROOM



Reps. Bruce Dammeier, Kristine Lytton, Marcie Maxwell, Gov. Chris Gregoire, Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, and myself, at the bill signing.

One of the most important bills signed into law this year was the teacher-evaluation bill. I co-sponsored this measure to take what is now a pilot-level program and expand it to all 295 school districts statewide. The program incorporates student-growth data and uses the resulting information when staffing and teacher-development decisions are made.

For the past year I have been working with a coalition of legislators, businesses, education advocates, teachers and parents to implement the new system. This builds on the pilot program put in place last year when we developed a practice that takes a broad view of a teacher's ability and rates him or her using four tiers: "Unsatisfactory," "Basic," "Proficient," and "Distinguished."

Our task since then was to implement the new evaluation system as an effective tool for the hiring, placement and development of teachers. I am proud to say that we succeeded.

The efforts by everyone involved made me proud to have helped bring the teacher-evaluation legislation forward early in the session.

Considering the significant change this measure represented, I was not surprised when concerns slowed its progress through the lawmaking process. However, after extensive talks between lawmakers, led by the governor, we presented a strong and fair compromise that passed with broad, bipartisan support.

MOVING FORWARD WITH BIPARTISAN REFORMS

The Legislature passed these key reforms:

- **Pension reform:** curtailing taxpayer-subsidized early-retirement for future public employees will help save \$1.3 billion over 25 years and lower out-of-pocket costs for current employees.
- **Public-school employee health care:** requires transparency and more equitable premiums for families of teachers and staff and would move districts into the highly successfully state employee benefits program if targets are not met.
- **Four-year balanced budget:** requires Legislature to balance budgets over four years instead of two, which will facilitate responsible spending and reduce the possibility of continuous massive deficits, which threaten our ability to invest in schools.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY SIGNED INTO LAW

In February the Legislature passed a marriage-equality bill that legalizes same-sex marriage in our state. I was proud to support the legislation because it is the right thing to do, promotes personal responsibility, protects religious freedom and most importantly allows people the right to marry the person they love.

PROTECTING THOSE WHO PROTECT US



In response to a series of tragic attacks on public safety officers in Washington, I and every other state lawmaker supported a bill to create a "Blue Alert" system. This legislation came before the Senate from the House of Representatives right after the killing of a Washington State Patrol trooper in Kitsap County; within two weeks it had been signed by the governor.

The new program will establish a statewide communications network to inform law enforcement and the public when anyone suspected of injuring or killing an officer is at large.

It's been disheartening to see the surge in violence against law-enforcement officers, so I'm proud of this common-sense approach to assist in apprehending suspects and shield innocent people from harm.

I was pleased to see broad support for this public-safety measure and the willingness to build this system using tried and true models.

CREATING JOBS WHILE IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE

The *Jobs Now Act*, otherwise known as the state's capital budget, encourages prosperity and invests in our future through a variety of important statewide building and construction projects.

This piece of legislation, which was updated during this session, is anticipated to generate over 22,000 jobs by funding infrastructure investments that are essential for the long-term success of our communities and state.



EARLY LEARNING EXCELLENCE – WaKIDS

I co-sponsored a successful bill that moves the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) program forward. The legislation takes what had been a pilot-level skills-assessment system and expands it statewide for students in all-day state-funded kindergarten classes.

This assessment tool helps kindergarten teachers tailor their instruction based on the skills and needs of incoming students and was a key component in our state's win of a Race to the Top Early-Learning Grant.



Taking this step allows us to continue our efforts to make sure our youngest children start their educational experience in the best possible position to graduate from high school. WaKIDS is the most successful and cost-effective tool to help ensure that as children grow up they can compete in the global economic marketplace.