

# Senator

# Steve Hobbs

WASHINGTON STATE SENATE

44th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

DISTRICT UPDATE 2009



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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2009 legislative session was one of the most gut-wrenching in recent memory. I didn't come to Olympia to remove tens of thousands of our citizens from state health programs or lay off care givers or educators, but our state's unprecedented financial crisis left us with few options.

I stood firm on my opposition to tax proposals that would hurt middle class families because just as thousands of Washingtonians have tightened their belts, I believe government must do the same. I didn't always make decisions popular with special interest groups, but I did what I felt was right for the hardworking people in this district.

Despite the grim economic picture, a lot of positive things happened during the session. We invested in small businesses to help them grow and create jobs, and we took steps to change the state's outdated funding formula so all students have access to a top quality education.

This newsletter is an overview of our legislative accomplishments during this difficult session.

It is an honor to represent you. As always, I welcome your questions and feedback.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Steve Hobbs".

Steve



## Positive Legislative Action

Despite the economic challenges, we passed a number of bills important to middle class families.

### Education

- ✓ We removed a number of unfunded mandates and put others under a 2-year suspension. The bill relates to mandates involving reporting requirements and curriculum assessments. This will give districts more time to educate our kids rather than meeting unnecessary state requirements. (SB 5889)
- ✓ Recognizing that Washington's K-12 funding structure is outdated, we passed a bill that expands the definition of basic education and establishes a new funding formula to meet the needs of students and schools. (HB 2261)



### Health care

- ✓ We passed legislation allowing the state to apply for a federal waiver to maximize federal funding for the Basic Health Plan and family planning services. The waiver is important because it could mitigate severe cuts to the Basic Health Program. (SB 5945)
- ✓ We took steps to drive down health care costs over time by establishing uniform standards to be followed by all health plans. Currently, 30 cents of every dollar is spent on administration. (SB 5346)
- ✓ We called for the development of guidelines and standards to improve patient access to and control of their health care information. (SB 5501)

### Family Security

- ✓ We established a separate fund for workforce training to get dislocated workers back to work in high-demand fields. (SB 5809)

- ✓ We passed legislation that calls for the recruitment of volunteer professionals from around the state to help families and individuals with incomes at or below the county median income level renegotiate their mortgage terms. (SB 6033)

### Business and Jobs

- ✓ We passed legislation to extend tax exemptions and credits to a variety of renewable energy products such as solar energy, biomass energy, tidal and wave energy, geothermal resources, and hog fuel (wood waste). (SB 6170)

- ✓ We passed legislation to waive penalties for first-time paperwork violations by small businesses.
- ✓ We passed legislation promoting energy efficiencies in buildings to create green jobs.



## Making tough decisions

There were no easy choices and no winners in the budget process. We identified and spared the people least able to withstand cuts in services and basic programs; avoided counterproductive cuts that might save money in the short term but lead to greater costs in the long term; and tried to be as innovative as possible in finding ways to cut spending that minimized cuts in services.



The operating budget totals \$31.4 billion.

### K-12 Education

While it is true we have made cuts to areas that are currently not considered basic education, the level of cuts has not been as severe as other parts of the budget. The average per district cut ranges from .1 percent up to about 4.8 percent. The state average cut is 2.2 percent. With federal stimulus dollars figured in, the Lake Stevens School District will see a net funding cut of 3 percent; Snohomish 3.2 percent; and Marysville 2.7 percent. Other budget areas have received cuts as high as 30 percent.

It is my sincere hope that we can restore all the K-12 education cuts when our economy turns around.

### Health Care

Unfortunately, funding for the Basic Health Plan has been reduced by 42

percent to save \$255 million. Some of the cuts will occur through attrition.

### Natural Resources

Lawmakers voted to keep all state parks open through a voluntary \$5 dollar donation program at time of vehicle registration. No hatcheries will be closed unless not enough revenue is raised from fees.

### Every dollar counts

I believe every tax dollar you send to Olympia should be used wisely. That's why I introduced Senate Bill 5693 to spare state agencies from being forced to set aside one-half of one percent of capital funds for the purchase



of art. My legislation would have made the requirement optional for the next two years and saved as much as \$5 million. When the bill failed to get support, I sponsored an amendment to the 2009-2011 capital budget which would have required the Washington State Arts Commission to restrict the purchase of art to artists living in Washington. If we're going to spend millions to subsidize artists during a severe recession, those tax dollars should at least go to artists living here. Even though the amendment was vetoed, I will continue to speak up when I see poor fiscal decisions being made.

## What I accomplished for you!

I was pleased that many of the bills I sponsored to make our communities and schools stronger were signed into law.

### Homebuyer tax credit

I submitted a budget provision to help thousands of Washingtonians become homeowners by removing the down payment obstacle. As many as 2,800 potential homebuyers will be able to put the federal tax credit for first-time homebuyers toward the actual home purchase and get the money at closing.

This plan will give hardworking people the opportunity to realize the American dream.

### Renewable Energy Tax Incentives

**Senate Bill 6170** promotes clean energy production and green jobs by extending tax exemptions and credits to a variety of renewable energy products such as solar energy, biomass energy, tidal and wave energy, geothermal resources, and hog fuel (wood waste).

Companies that create energy from fuel cells, sun, wind, biomass energy, tidal and wave energy, geothermal resources, anaerobic digestion and technology that converts energy from exhaust or landfill gas would receive a 100 percent sales tax exemption on machinery and equipment.

The tax relief is funded primarily by the repeal of an existing tax credit for the purchase of hybrid cars, which is now covered by tax credits at the federal level.

This legislation is good for the economy and good for our planet.

### Education flexibility

For years school districts have asked the Legislature to ease the burden that state mandates have placed on public schools. Under **Senate Bill 5889**, certain laws relating to information, notice and reporting requirements, and curriculum and assessment mandates are suspended, delayed, repealed, or amended. This will give districts more time to educate our kids rather than meeting unnecessary state requirements.

### SR-9 Bridge Project

I secured \$1.5 million in the transportation budget for a new four-lane bridge project on SR-9 over the Snohomish River. The money will be used to pay for the first



phase of the multi-phase project such as environmental planning.

### Solar energy

**Senate Bill 5136** bans homeowner associations from prohibiting residents from installing solar panels on their roofs as long as it meets health and safety standards and other requirements determined by the type of solar panel.

## Protecting the Children of those who protect us

Military children are often at an academic disadvantage because of frequent moves from duty station to duty station. I don't believe they should have to sacrifice so that their parents can defend our freedoms. My bill, **Senate Bill 5248**, enacts a multi-state interstate compact to improve educational opportunities for military children living in Washington. Among other things, it promotes flexibility and coopera-

tion between the educational system, parents and the students, and removes barriers to educational success.

## Veterans Services

**Senate Bill 5035** requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to study ways to increase veterans' access to state and federal assistance programs. The department must submit a report to the Legislature that addresses, among other things, how to identify all veterans in the state within five years and how to effectively inform veterans of state and federal programs.

## Protecting our aerospace industry

The aerospace industry is a source of pride in this state. It also provides family wage jobs that are critical to the economy. Losing even one aerospace job to other states such as Kansas or North Carolina isn't an option. To prevent that from happening, I accepted an offer to serve on the newly formed Washington Council on Aerospace. The Council will look for ways to keep Washington competitive in the Aerospace industry by removing obstacles that are hurting the sector.

# Local Issues — What's Olympia Doing for You?

The Legislature must make decisions as a group to serve the state as a whole, but it's also our duty to protect the interests of the constituents we represent. I was able to secure funding for the following projects.

2009-2011 Highway Projects	
SR 9/Lundeen Parkway to SR 92 – Add Lanes/Improve intersections	\$26.7 million
US 2/43rd Ave SE Vic to 50th Ave SE Vic – Bridge Rehabilitation	\$12.0 million
SR 9/SR 96 to Marsh Rd – Add Lanes and Improve Intersections	\$11.0 million
I-5/52nd Ave W to SR 526 – NB Paving Lynnwood, Everett	\$5.8 million
SR 9/SR 528 - Improve Intersection	\$5.7 million
SR 9/Lake Stevens Way to 20th St SE – Improve Intersection	\$3.8 million
SR 9/176th St SE Vicinity to SR 96 – Add Signal and Turn Lanes	\$2.6 million

I-5, Marysville to Stillaguamish River (Message boards, etc.)	\$2.4 million
New four-lane bridge project on SR-9 over the Snohomish River	\$1.5 million
I-5/SR 526 to Marine View Drive – Add HOV Lanes	\$1.4 million
US 2/Route Development Plan	\$400,000
I-5/128th St SW (SR 96) – Interchange Improvements	\$220,000
SR 527/132nd St SE to 112th St SE – Add Lanes	\$154,000
I-5/124th St SW – Bicycle/Pedestrian Overcrossing – Safety	\$42,000

Capital Projects	
Marshland Diking District – Dike Repairs (Local and Community Projects)	\$500,000
Marysville Boys and Girls Club	\$500,000
Renovations to the Mill Creek Annex Building	\$30,000

## I want to hear from you

Remove this section, place it in a self-addressed, stamped envelope and mail it back to let me know what kind of ideas you have for balancing our budget and making the most of your tax dollars.

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Or give me a call at (360) 786-7686 or send me an e-mail at [hobbs.steve@leg.wa.gov](mailto:hobbs.steve@leg.wa.gov).

You can also visit my web page and sign up for my E-News at [www.sdc.wa.gov/senators/hobbs/](http://www.sdc.wa.gov/senators/hobbs/)



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**Senator Steve Hobbs**