



# 2020 Session Review

Senator  
**Curtis King**

*Serving Washington's 14th District*

Glenwood • Tieton • Lyle • Bingen • Roosevelt • Bickleton • Trout Lake • Naches • Centerville • White Salmon • Cowiche • Stevenson • Goldendale • Yakima

## OLYMPIA OFFICE

115 Irv Newhouse Building  
PO Box 40414  
Olympia, WA 98504-1414

## EMAIL

[Curtis.King@leg.wa.gov](mailto:Curtis.King@leg.wa.gov)

## PHONE:

360-786-7626

## LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE

1-800-562-6000

## WEBSITE

[SenatorCurtisKing.org](http://SenatorCurtisKing.org)

## HOW TO STAY CONNECTED WITH LEGISLATURE

- [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)
- [tvw.org](http://tvw.org)

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2020 legislative session ended on March 12, as scheduled. It was a very busy 60-day session, as over 2,000 bills were introduced into the Legislature this year. Only 389 made it through the entire legislative process and onto the governor's desk.

This newsletter takes a look at the supplemental operating, capital and transportation budgets that were passed, as well as some other key or controversial proposals.

It continues to be a great honor and privilege to serve as your 14th Legislative District state senator. If you have questions or comments about the bills or issues that were before the Legislature this year, or if you have ideas for future legislation, please let me know. You can contact my office by phone, email or regular mail.

Sincerely,

## Operating budget includes funding for Toppenish Hospital

During the legislative session, I sponsored legislation in the Senate (SB 6354) and Rep. Jeremie Default sponsored in the House (HB 2729) to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for Toppenish Hospital up to the rate nearby hospitals already receive. While the Legislature did not take final action on either bill, we were able to secure \$2.4 million in the 2020 supplemental operating budget. After the closure of Astria's Yakima Regional Hospital, we were concerned about the possibility of losing another hospital in our valley. The Toppenish Hospital serves some of the Yakima Valley's most remote communities. It was important that we made sure the hospital could continue treating patients close to home.



## **Supplemental capital budget funds local projects**

The 2020 supplemental capital budget passed at the end of this session funds the construction and maintenance of state buildings, public schools, higher education facilities, public land, parks and other assets throughout Washington. My 14th District seat-mates, Reps. Chris Corry and Gina Mosbrucker, and I were able to secure these local projects in the capital budget:

- \$8,700,000 in Department of Ecology remedial action grant money for environmental contamination cleanup of the Yakima City Landfill near Interstate 82. This land is the former Boise Cascade log yard.
- \$1,000,000 for the Mount Adams School District to help pay for modular classrooms to replace portables.
- \$300,000 for Triumph Treatment Services Child Care in Yakima.
- \$275,000 for Yakima County Care Campus Conversion Project.
- \$250,000 for the Klickitat County Domestic Violence Shelter in Goldendale.
- \$200,000 for the Salvation Army Community Resource Center in Yakima.
- \$5,000 for the Lions Club Community Center Generator in Lyle.



## **Democrats pass controversial measure requiring specific sex-education teaching in public schools**

In my years in the Senate, I have seen very few bills more controversial than the one (Senate Bill 5395) approved this year that will require every public school in Washington to provide “comprehensive” sex education to all 6-12 grade students starting in the 2021-22 school year and then in 2022-23 the K-5 students will be taught comprehensive sex education.

I voted no on this bill because this is an issue that should be for local school districts to decide. It should not be mandated from Olympia, especially an approach that is so controversial with parents and educators.

During the session, my office and other legislators’ offices were overwhelmed with phone calls, emails and in-person visits from concerned parents and others opposed to the sex-education bill. Despite that, Democrats in the Senate and House of Representatives still passed the bill. All Senate Republicans voted against the bill and we all signed a letter to Governor Inslee, asking him to veto the sex-education bill. Unfortunately, the governor allowed it to become law.

Soon after the bill was signed, a group filed a referendum that seeks to put the sex-education bill on a state-wide ballot this fall for voters to decide whether this bill should remain law or be rejected.

# 2020 SESSION REVIEW

## Supplemental transportation budget aims to resume highway projects



As ranking Republican on the Senate Transportation Committee, I joined other legislative transportation leaders in negotiating a 2020 supplemental transportation budget that was passed by the Legislature in the final days of the session.

This budget helps to resume the transportation projects that were “paused” by Governor Inslee following last November’s passage of Initiative 976, which lowered vehicle-license tabs back to \$30. I worked to get these projects moving again or at least partially completed during this construction cycle. These projects provide jobs and are important to our economy, especially during these uncertain times. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed sections of this budget that would have allowed these projects to resume.

The supplemental transportation budget fully funds our highway and multimodal projects. While it is not an ideal budget, it provides a realistic and short-term fix to our state’s transportation needs in this current situation. Our challenge with transportation will come in the next several years. We have many transportation needs that must be addressed, from culverts to bridges to highway preservation and maintenance. We have to find a way to address these needs that is fair and equitable to every Washingtonian.

## Legislature supports mental-health needs for law enforcement

As many know, police and other law enforcement officers face traumatic situations on the job that can cause great stress or even mental or emotional problems. It’s important to address the mental-health needs of our law-enforcement officers. That is why I prime-sponsored Senate Bill 6570, which establishes a Law Enforcement Officer Health and Wellness Task Force that will be under the state Department of Health. The bill also requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to award grants for three pilot projects to support behavioral-health improvements and suicide prevention for law enforcement officers. I was pleased that this proposal received unanimous approval in both the Senate and House.



## Retired teachers, public employees to receive benefits increase

Some retired teachers and retired public employees will be helped by a new law unanimously approved by the Legislature this year. House Bill 1390 provides a one-time 3-percent increase to the retirement benefits of retirees in the Public Employees’ Retirement System Plan (PERS) 1 and the Teachers’ Retirement System Plan (TRS) 1, up to a maximum of \$62.50 per month.

# 2020 Session Review

LD14

## Coronavirus resources and tips

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a major change in our lives. Schools and libraries have been closed for several weeks, as have many restaurants, bars and other businesses that are considered nonessential. This is a frustrating situation for all of us, but it's important for all of us to focus on facts, not fear, and follow the precautions that we're all being advised to follow.

The ultimate goal is to minimize the number of people needing hospitalization. Even though our hospitals and health-care professionals are excellent, there is limited bed space in hospitals and other medical facilities to treat people who react badly to the coronavirus, just as it would be for any other serious communicable illness. That is why it's important for all of us to do what we can to limit the spread of COVID-19 and prevent a spike in the number of confirmed cases.

We have made recommendations to the Governor's Office about the use of Yakima Regional Hospital. With the possibility of a lack of hospital beds, especially in eastern Washington, it is critical that all possible hospital beds are made available to help fight COVID-19.

**Federal and state officials have compiled resources and tips for the public to use during this difficult time. You can go to these websites or phone numbers for more information:**

- [coronavirus.wa.gov](https://coronavirus.wa.gov) (the state's official COVID-19 website)
- [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov) (federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [doh.wa.gov](https://doh.wa.gov) (state Department of Health website)
- **1-800-525-0127** (Department of Health hotline, open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.)
- [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov) (employment issues)
- [k12.wa.us](https://k12.wa.us) (school closures)