



Dear Friends,

At the time of my last update the regular session was winding down and it was looking like a special session was inevitable. We are now 15 days into the special session and very little has been decided. The Legislature was supposed to adjourn on April 24, but we adjourned two days early. That would be great if we had completed the work we were sent to Olympia to do, but plenty of work went unfinished and there is already talk of a second special session.

Going into extra time is inexcusable and taxpayers should be upset. The Democrat majority party dragged its feet on the state operating budget. We all knew in November the financial situation our state was in and drafting a budget would be difficult. However, 105 days is plenty of time. The House Democrats waited until after the March 17 revenue forecast before writing a budget that came out April 4. That budget passed the House on April 9, but the Senate took no action until April 19 – less than a week from adjournment. There seemed to be no incentive for the majority party to finish on time, as we didn't work late or much on the weekend during the last month. It was a frustrating situation.

It is important to know that House Republicans did not stand on the sidelines and say "no" to Democrat proposals. In fact, it was the first time ever the minority party offered its own budget proposal. Many of our budget ideas were incorporated into the House Democrat budget, but when it came down to it, there were still too many differences with Republicans prioritizing education and the Democrats pushing for more in social services. You can find our Republican budgeting principles and alternative budget solution [here](#).

A special session costs nearly \$16,000 for every day that lawmakers are at the Capitol. At a time when the Legislature is struggling to write a balanced two-year budget, it seems ludicrous we are spending more money for a special session.

Workers' compensation reform

The fact that we were unable to get meaningful workers' compensation reform passed during the regular session is just as big a disappointment than not passing a budget. This is another instance in which we knew how badly something needed to be done because of the dire financial situation of the workers' compensation system, yet nothing that would provide long-term reform has been passed. I have shared with you numerous facts that reflect the poor state of the workers' compensation funds. In fact, last year, State Auditor Brian Sonntag sent a letter to Labor and Industries Director Judy Schurke addressing the \$360 million deficit in the workers' compensation accident fund that read in part, "Our report is a warning that if this condition continues, the future liabilities may exceed assets within a few years, creating a financial hole difficult to recover from." He also pointed out the fund has a greater than 70 percent chance of insolvency and the Medical Aid Account could also be facing insolvency within the next few years. The Wenatchee World recently published an editorial I wrote on the issue. You can read it [here](#).

Capital budget and debt reduction

Washington state legislators are considering a measure that would reduce the state's long-term debt to put our state budgets on more stable and sustainable footing.

The Debt Reduction Act of 2011, [Senate Joint Resolution \(SJR\) 8215](#) would accomplish both of those goals. My seatmate in the Senate, [Linda Evans Parlette](#), actually co-sponsored the measure in the Senate. The Senate passed the bill unanimously during the regular session and have already passed it again in the special session. The Senate had to pass the measure again, because the House failed to take any action on the bill.

Keep in mind, the capital budget is our budget that funds construction of schools and colleges, develops community infrastructure, maintains parks and recreation areas, and is funded in part by state bonds. Payment on those bonds is made from the state operating budget, which also funds other priorities such as education and health care. This debt is one of the fastest-growing parts of the budget, climbing from \$970 million 10 years ago to \$1.8 billion in the current biennial budget. The operating budget has doubled its level of debt payment in the past decade. The Debt Reduction Act addresses this problem by phasing down our constitutional debt limit from 9 to 7 percent. This will reduce the debt payments we make in the operating budget over the next 20 years by more than \$3 billion.

[Rep. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake](#), is our ranking member on the [House Capital Budget Committee](#). You can read her column on this issue in The Seattle Times [here](#).

The status of The Debt Reduction Act and capital budget are still up in the air. Chair of the Capital Budget Committee, Rep. Hans Dunshee, is holding up SJR 8215, which in turn is delaying passage of the capital budget. He feels the legislation will cost us jobs, which is not the case. As Rep. Warnick points out in her editorial, thousands of people would be put to work by the capital budget even if SJR 8215 is in place. It is a common-sense measure to put our state on more solid financial footing and benefit our state into the future by avoiding a senseless buildup of debt.

District office and town hall meetings

Even though we are in a rolling special session, my district office is now open. Please do not hesitate to call if you need any assistance or would like to set up a meeting. My office number is 509-664-1274. I also plan to set up a series of town hall meetings in the district over the summer. We are waiting to see when we will officially be done with the special session. We hope to schedule events in four or five cities within the district. We will keep you posted on dates and locations.

Please share this with anyone who might be interested in keeping up on what is happening in the Legislature. If for any reason you'd like to be taken off my e-mail distribution list, you may do so by clicking on this [link](#) and selecting "leave." Or, this same [link](#) can also be used by anyone to subscribe to my e-mail updates. They can simply select "join."

Please do not use the reply button on the mail messages. This is an automated method for the legislator to send information to constituents and others interested in the Washington State Legislature. To contact me directly, send e-mail to cary.condotta@leg.wa.gov or click [here](#).

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Sincerely,

[Rep. Cary Condotta](#)
12th Legislative District

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