
Working together for **ONE WASHINGTON**

Democrats Deliver

Washington State House of Representatives
House Democratic Caucus

A constructive majority
for a progressive agenda with common sense values
focused on the "kitchen table" concerns
of the people

Speaker Frank Chopp

Highlights

4/8/08

In the Washington State Legislature, the Democratic majority and agenda has accomplished more in the last few years than has been done in decades: significant legislation enacted, greater progress made, the needs of the people better addressed, and victories achieved and sustained. Some highlights:

EDUCATION

- ✓ Initiated a new emphasis on **early learning**, funding thousands of new enrollments, improving the wages and benefits of child care workers, and creating a new Early Learning Department to consolidate Head Start, Early Childhood Education, and child care programs.
- ✓ Funded a historic increase in **basic education funding**, including all-day kindergarten, class size reduction, special education, transportation, math curriculum, and other concerns.
- ✓ Doubled the state investment in **school construction** across Washington.
- ✓ Implemented two **citizen initiatives**, I-728 to **reduce class sizes**, and I-732 to **raise salaries** of teachers and school employees.
- ✓ Created the **Education Legacy Trust Fund**, generating new revenue from wealthy estates to help pay for our public schools and higher education institutions.
- ✓ Expanded **higher education enrollments**, as well as financial aid through state need grants, vastly increasing opportunities for students to get a college education, particularly for jobs in high demand fields.
- ✓ Created the **Opportunity Grants** program, providing free tuition and educational stipends for thousands of students in community colleges, linking students to specific jobs.
- ✓ Approved a constitutional amendment for **simple majorities for school levies**, allowing the voters to make it easier to approve operating levies for local school districts.
- ✓ Forced a major **reform of math curriculum and testing**, matching new learning standards with the requirements of modern-day jobs in the real world.
- ✓ Initiated a **Community Schools** program, to open up public school facilities for multi-purpose community activities, co-location of related non-profit agencies such as Boys and Girls Clubs, and ensuring that surplus school properties are kept for community and public use.
- ✓ Enhanced **Career and Technical Education** programs and **Skills Centers** to provide better connections to high demand jobs and more modern training facilities.
- ✓ Reformed and expanded the **Learning Assistance Program**, to target extra support to low-income students who are struggling to succeed in our public schools.

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY

- ✓ Enacted one of the best and most comprehensive **Children's Health** programs in the nation, guaranteeing that all kids have health care, with a medical home and other services, regardless of income or background.
- ✓ Transformed **home care** for tens of thousands of elderly and disabled people, greatly increasing training, wages, and benefits for home care workers, and thereby improving the quality of care for our most vulnerable citizens.
- ✓ Enacted **mental health parity**, requiring insurance plans to include treatment for mental illness, just like any physical illness.
- ✓ Increased **mental health funding** significantly, back-filling federal budget cuts and giving new tools for local communities to better serve the mentally-ill.
- ✓ Created a **prescription drug buyer's consortium**, using the state's purchasing power to save tens of millions of dollars every year for individuals and health care plans.
- ✓ Enacted one of the best **Patient's Bill of Rights** in the nation, ensuring that health care decisions are more in the hands of patients and their doctors, thereby fostering better care and patient safety.
- ✓ Dedicated significant revenues to **tobacco prevention**, helping reduce the % of smokers to a historic low, and making Washington state one of the top national leaders in this regard.
- ✓ Improved **hospital safety**, enacting legislation to help prevent staff injuries caused by needle sticks, patient lifting, and other factors.
- ✓ Doubled funding for the state's **Housing Trust Fund** to \$200 million, building tens of thousands of new homes for low-income people, including the elderly, disabled, homeless, farm workers, and low-wage workers.
- ✓ Created the **Home Security Fund** and the **Washington Families Fund**, providing ongoing services to tens of thousands of poor people, particularly homeless families as well as individuals, and thereby helping break the cycle of poverty.
- ✓ Extended unemployment insurance **benefits for victims of domestic violence**.
- ✓ Reformed **foster care** in the state, by providing much greater funding and better oversight of the placements and services for children in foster care.

JOBS

- ✓ Approved a massive influx of **transportation investments**, more than any legislature in state history, beginning construction of hundreds of new projects across the state, making the roads safer, lessening congestion, and spurring the economy.
- ✓ Cultivated an **Ag Agenda**, providing significant tax relief and investing in new research and technology for Washington agriculture, helping farmers and farm workers to better survive and thrive in the global marketplace.
- ✓ Created the **Life Sciences Fund** and invested in the Global Health Challenge, allocating hundreds of millions of dollars to high-tech research that will help save lives across the world and encourage innovations in our state's economy.
- ✓ Broadened **collective bargaining rights** to more workers than any legislature in decades, including home care, child care, and higher education, as well as state employees through civil service reform.
- ✓ Protected the best **minimum wage** in the nation from numerous attempts to repeal and restrict the wage level and annual cost-of-living adjustments.
- ✓ Approved paid **family medical leave**, which will provide workers with financial assistance when they need to take care of their newborn children or adoptees, making Washington the second state in the nation to enact such a law.
- ✓ Created **worker re-training** programs, assisting tens of thousands of dislocated workers to get new jobs in the economy, making Washington state a national leader in this regard.
- ✓ Worked with a broad-based coalition to design and enact a package of legislation for the **aerospace industry**, leading to the decision to construct the 787 Dreamliner in Washington, defying the common predictions that we would not be successful, and helping to develop our state as a great place to create jobs.
- ✓ Enacted a series of laws to require and encourage **apprenticeship programs**, including Running Start for the Trades, Helmets to Hardhats, and other programs, to enlist workers in the high-skills, high-wages jobs in construction, aerospace, health care, and other fields.
- ✓ Created a **linked-deposit program**, to finance women and minority-owned businesses, helping entrepreneurs to achieve the American Dream.
- ✓ Initiated a **Building Communities Fund**, to construct community centers and facilities, bringing together and uplifting local communities across the state.

ENVIRONMENT

- ✓ Adopted **Green Building Standards** for public construction projects, requiring a higher level of design and construction to protect and enhance the environment.
- ✓ Enacted an **Energy Freedom** agenda, requiring bio-fuels standards, and funding a variety of capital projects and research efforts to encourage alternative energy that will promote cleaner air and independence from foreign oil.
- ✓ Doubled the investment in the **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program** to \$100 million for recreation, open space, and habitat projects across the Evergreen State.
- ✓ Adopted **clean car standards**, matching California regulations on automobile emissions.
- ✓ Enacted the **Puget Sound Partnership**, a massive undertaking to clean up our largest waterway, including major funding for a variety of projects focused on getting the job done.
- ✓ Launched and funded a **rescue tug** stationed at Neah Bay, to help prevent oil spills in the Straits of Juan de Fuca, protecting our precious shorelines from pollution.
- ✓ Passed legislation to promote **e-waste recycling** of electronics equipment, one of the first states in the nation to do so.
- ✓ Mandated **bans on toxic substances**, including mercury and PBDEs, from the marketplace, in order to lessen the risks to public health.
- ✓ Established state-wide goals, standards, and timelines, among the most aggressive in the nation, for **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** to address global warming.
- ✓ Initiated a **Green Jobs** program, to develop opportunities in the new green economy, addressing recruitment, education, and training needs for businesses and workers.
- ✓ Enacted laws, including a **ban on toxic toys**, the toughest in the nation, as well as pesticide management in schools, protecting our children from harmful chemicals.
- ✓ Created a **Local Farms, Healthy Kids** effort, promoting the production of fresh fruits and vegetables in nearby farms for consumption through local schools and food banks.
- ✓ Fostered **Evergreen Cities**, supporting local efforts to protect and create urban forests, as well as street trees, thereby enhancing quality of life and ensuring cleaner air and water.

REFORM

- ✓ Stopped all proposals for private financing and control of our public roads and freeways, insisting that all state projects be built with **public financing in transportation**, such as the very successful new Tacoma Narrows Bridge.
- ✓ Re-structured **transportation governance**, requiring the Director of Transportation to be hired and fired by the Governor, thereby bringing a much clearer line of authority, responsibility and accountability.
- ✓ Expanded **civil rights** for gays and lesbians, prohibiting discrimination in employment, finances, and other arenas.
- ✓ Created and greatly expanded a **Domestic Partnership Registry**, providing gays and lesbians with many of the same rights as married couples.
- ✓ Enacted legislation greatly expanding **performance audits** of programs in state agencies as well as preferences in the state's tax code, increasing the power of the State Auditor, who is independently elected, to employ this tool for accountability.
- ✓ Blocked all proposals for undoing **energy industry regulation**, inoculating Washington State from most of the economic disasters of deregulated energy markets.
- ✓ Reformed **drug sentencing laws**, encouraging the use of treatment rather than incarceration of non-violent drug offenders.
- ✓ Reformed the **offender re-entry** system, getting smart on fighting crime by reducing the causes and factors of recidivism by prisoners re-entering society.
- ✓ Created one of the most progressive welfare reform efforts in the nation, **Community Jobs**, which is turning welfare checks into pay checks and providing economic opportunity for tens of thousands of low-income people.
- ✓ Enacted a long list of **sex offender laws**, among the toughest in the nation, increasing prison sentences and other punishments for those who commit such crimes, and providing greater funding for services and advocacy for victims.
- ✓ Required the **reporting of sexual abuse** perpetrated by members of the clergy and other similar positions of trust.

- ✓ Mandated **insurance fair conduct**, empowering citizens to receive triple damages if insurance companies unreasonably refuse or delay payment of legitimate insurance claims.
- ✓ Enacted a package of laws for **medical malpractice reform**, to ensure greater safety for patients, while at the same time, lower the costs of health care.
- ✓ Passed legislation to improve **patient safety**, through stronger disciplinary standards and licensing for all health care providers and mental health counselors, as well as making real-time information more available for doctors and pharmacists to reduce medical errors.
- ✓ Mandated **health insurance reforms** in the "individual market," requiring the state's Insurance Commissioner to review and approve or deny increases in insurance premiums.
- ✓ Enacted **mortgage loan regulations**, protecting consumers from unscrupulous financing, requiring mortgage brokers to work in the best interests of consumers, and promoting **financial literacy** through education and counseling for greater homeowner security.
- ✓ Expanded **tenant rights** when rental units are converted to condominiums, requiring much greater notification, relocation assistance, and other protections.
- ✓ Authorized local governments to create **public campaign financing**, helping reduce the impact of special interests in elections.
- ✓ Created the **Working Families Tax Credit**, to provide low-wage workers with tax relief similar to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, making our tax system more fair and helping families to make ends meet.
- ✓ Defended the people's **right to privacy**, including limits on "data skimming" of personal information garnered from radio-frequency-identification-devices (RFIDs), requiring consent before cell phone numbers are disclosed, and other measures.
- ✓ Began a complete **reform of the state ferry system**, slashing expenses in headquarters administration, starting construction of six new ferry boats, and better prioritizing the operating and capital budgets.