



18th District Legislative Report

SENATOR Ann Rivers **REPRESENTATIVE** Brandon Vick **REPRESENTATIVE** Larry Hoff

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18TH DISTRICT

2020 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Sen. Ann Rivers • Rep. Brandon Vick • Rep. Larry Hoff

Plans for the interim

As your state lawmakers, we represent you all year long. During the interim, we will be working on your behalf, anticipating problems and developing solutions toward financial and infrastructure recovery from the repercussions of COVID-19. We look forward to meeting with you to identify issues impacting you and your families, your jobs, and your businesses, as soon as social distancing restrictions are removed.


Whether it's at community events, business tours, in-person meetings, roundtables, or working on the issues that matter to you, we will be actively engaged making sure we stay in touch during the interim.

This is an election year, which means this is the final newsletter you'll be receiving from us until the election is certified in November. However, you can still reach out to us because we are able to respond to constituents who contact us.

So, please do not hesitate to share your input and questions with each of us. To reach us, please see our contact information on the front page of this report.

It is an honor to serve you!

Sincerely,


Sen. Ann Rivers


Rep. Brandon Vick


Rep. Larry Hoff

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18TH DISTRICT

2020 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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Sen. Ann Rivers



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Senate and other official committees:

- Health and Long-Term Care
- Ways and Means
- Environment, Energy & Technology
- Rules
- Legislative Committee on Economic Development & International Relations
- Washington State Women's Commission

Rep. Brandon Vick



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House and other official committees:

- Consumer Protection and Business (Ranking Member)
- Commerce and Gaming
- Finance
- Washington State Gambling Commission
- Business Recovery Legislative Task Force

Rep. Larry Hoff



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House and other official committees:

- Consumer Protection and Business (Assistant Ranking Member)
- Appropriations
- Labor and Workplace Standards
- Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee
- Washington State Building Code Council
- Future of Work Task Force

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We are in the midst of an extremely difficult challenge for our state and country. Our hearts go out to everyone who has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We know many of you have questions about what to do during this uncertain time, so we wanted to provide links to critical information, along with resources and guidance, that we hope will be helpful as this crisis continues to unfold.

Washington state's official COVID-19 website is coronavirus.wa.gov. There you will find information—available in a number of languages other than English, including Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, and Korean—on a number of topics related to the pandemic.

One such topic is "Business and workers." Employers and employees have been hit have been hit hard in recent weeks. While many large businesses have the cash reserves to weather a financial downturn and pay their employees, the same cannot be said for our smaller businesses—the lifeblood of our economy. If you can, please support these businesses by placing orders for merchandise, buying gift cards, ordering takeout or delivery, or doing anything else you can think of to help them keep their doors open.

The state's Department of Revenue, Department of Financial Institutions, and Employment Security Department have created web pages focused on business relief, benefits available for workers, and unemployment assistance:

- dor.wa.gov/taxrelief or by phone (360) 705-6705
- dfi.wa.gov/coronavirus or by phone (360) 902-8700 or Toll Free 1 (877) 746-4334
- esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19 or by phone (360) 902-9500

The U.S. Small Business Administration has also created a page for businesses, private nonprofits, homeowners, and renters to apply for disaster loan assistance:

- disasterloan.sba.gov/ela or by phone 1 (800) 659-2955

Below are additional links we believe will be helpful to you:


- General guidance from the state's Department of Health: doh.wa.gov/coronavirus or by phone 1 (800) 659-2955
- The latest information from the Governor's Office: governor.wa.gov/coronavirus or by phone (360) 902-4111
- K-12 guidance and resources from OSPI: k12.wa.us or by phone (360) 725-6000
- Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/coronavirus or by phone 1 (800) 232-4636

If you have comments, questions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us by phone or email.


We are honored to serve each and every one of you. You are in our prayers.

Stay strong and take care of one another. We will get through this challenge together.

Sincerely,


Sen. Ann Rivers


Rep. Brandon Vick


Rep. Larry Hoff

Sen. Ann Rivers • Rep. Brandon Vick • Rep. Larry Hoff

2020 session recap

While every legislative session is different, this year’s 60-day session certainly went in a direction no one could have expected. The need to address the homelessness crisis was at the forefront of most lawmakers’ minds when we arrived at the Capitol to begin session in January, and the Legislature made progress on that, along with the budget updates that are typically among the highest-priority tasks for a short session. Along the way, there were also debates and votes on familiar topics—health care, transportation, government regulations, energy and the environment, for instance—and specific issues like protecting consumer data, intervening in a global dispute involving Washington’s aerospace sector, the legalization of gambling on sports, and a major change in how schools provide sex education.

Then came the emergency that overshadowed all else by the time we were wrapping up our work: the coronavirus outbreak. Before session adjourned, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle came together to approve a bill allocating \$200 million (\$175 million coming from the state’s “rainy-day fund”) for coronavirus-related public-health efforts at the state and local levels.

Spending vetoes show COVID-19 influence on budget agreement

State services and programs are funded through an operating budget that covers a two-year period. In the second year, legislators reopen the budget to make adjustments in response to costs that couldn’t be foreseen. The cost of fighting summer wildfires is a good example. Last year, budget writers included an estimated cost, but only this year could they account for the actual expenses from 2019.

Our state’s economy was particularly strong between the end of the 2019 legislative session and the beginning of this year’s session, producing more than a billion dollars beyond the level of tax revenue Washington’s chief economist had projected. The Legislature could have maintained services and programs at the same level for the second year of the budget cycle, without big spending increases, and offered significant tax relief instead. We could have agreed with that, had it happened. Although the \$975 million in new spending in this year’s final compromise budget was a noticeably smaller amount than what the Senate and House majorities had approved individually—which we attribute to the COVID-19 situation—it still put spending in the 2019-21 budget at a level 20% higher than the 2017-19 budget. For that reason, we could not support it.

Out of further necessity, the governor vetoed 147 items and reduced spending by about \$235 million in this budget and by a total of about \$445 million over the four-year outlook. Given the toll the coronavirus has had on our economy, we would’ve liked to have seen even more spending reductions. However, these additional savings will help us as we work to recover from the damaging effects of COVID-19.

The second of the state’s quarterly revenue forecasts is due in mid-June. It should indicate whether the operating budget updates, which take effect July 1, will be sustainable. If not, we must be prepared for a “special” legislative session to make more budget adjustments.



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Helping our businesses and economy recover

The COVID-19 pandemic has burdened our state economy and almost everyone living in Washington. One of our biggest tasks moving forward, as we pivot from prevention to recovery, will be helping our state economy rebound. This must be our major focus as we begin the process to get Washington back where it needs to be financially.

However, there is much work to be done, and that will require sound fiscal policy and responsibility, less government regulation, more affordable housing, and meaningful property tax relief. To that end, lawmakers have been discussing several ideas to give the economy a financial boost, including tax relief, tax credits, regulatory reform, and new economic development opportunities.

These ideas are in the beginning stages, but as your state lawmakers, we are working together to bring Washington businesses and families the help they need. For example, one possibility would be to waive penalties and interest for business and occupation (B&O) tax payments during the months businesses were forced to shut down because of social distancing. Not only would we waive the interest and penalties, we would also advocate waiving the tax payment all together for the quarters in which the emergency exists.

Other possibilities include allowing a B&O tax credit for donations made by businesses in response to the crisis during the emergency and offering a B&O tax credit for businesses who have continued to pay employees who would’ve otherwise been laid off. These are just few of the things we’ve been discussing but there are many more.

Additionally, one of the best things we could do to help people who have been hit so hard by this crisis would be to lower property taxes throughout the state. This would ease the financial burden for so many families and individuals struggling to pay their bills. It would also free up more money for people to put back into the state economy, providing a much-needed boost.



Public safety: After three years, a solution to local river-access issue



This session saw Senator Rivers deeply involved in discussions about consumer-data privacy, prescription-drug transparency, and access to long-term care coverage, and leading on an innovative approach for increasing the salmon population. Of her five bills to reach the governor, which include

an important update of animal-welfare laws, she’s proudest of **SB 5613**. It completes her effort (working with Ridgefield resident David Morgan, pictured here, and partnering with Rep. Hoff in the House) to address an illegal-parking situation that hinders emergency-response access to a recreation site along the Lewis River, close to a railroad bridge with a history of injuries and fatalities. It took three years of work for this seemingly simple bill to become law – but perseverance pays off!

Addressing local jobs in the 18th District



In January, Representatives Vick and Hoff had the opportunity to tour local steel fabricator Alpha Iron, which has operated in Ridgefield since 2007 and employs 120 people. After the tour, they sat down with the owners for a discussion about how Washington’s prevailing-wage law is making it harder for them (and other companies in Clark County) to compete for local projects. Currently, Clark County’s prevailing wage is more than double what it is in several other counties, including King, Chelan and Spokane.

It was a productive conversation that included Department of Labor and Industries Director Joel Sacks. Representatives Vick and Hoff say they will continue working to find a solution to create more local jobs and spur economic growth in Clark County, and will also keep meeting with other businesses.