

Dear Fellow Washingtonians:

As you know, we just finished perhaps the toughest legislative session since the Great Depression. There may be a special session to complete a handful of items, but the truly heavy lifting is done including passage of the operating budget.

I would like to thank the members of the Legislature and the many advocates and citizens who took the time to share their perspective in Olympia. You confronted some of the most significant challenges the state has faced in decades.

Addressing those challenges required tough decisions. Unfortunately, the people of Washington will feel the pain of the difficult choices required to address the budget crisis. Like nearly every other state, we are managing our way through a deep recession, and severe budget cuts across the entire government were unavoidable.

In my inaugural speech in January, I asked the Legislature to summon the courage and the spirit of sacrifice to confront the challenge of a generation. I'm honored to say that's exactly what its members did by passing a responsible budget for very tough times.

We also prepared our state for a 21st century economy — especially in the monumental steps we took to build a transportation system that will create jobs and help us emerge stronger from this recession.

In the weeks, months and years ahead, all Washingtonians will feel the

impacts of the hard decisions the Legislature made – and we are now required to make along with nearly every other state – after the mortgage and financial markets set off the Great Recession we find ourselves in.

Amid these difficult changes, I ask that we continue – and strengthen – the partnership we forged last year when you helped me craft the budget to better position ourselves for the challenges to come. I continue to need your skill and creativity to reform and improve how government serves our citizens in these difficult circumstances.

I want and need your ideas. You are the people on the ground, and I can't do this without you. Please respond to this e-mail, as you did last summer and fall, to share your input.

I remain confident that the generosity and spirit I have seen exhibited daily throughout Washington – families donating hours at food banks, companies innovating to remain competitive, communities responding to help their most vulnerable – will prevail.

Thank you,

Chris

Below is an update on the Legislative session –

Potential special session

The Legislature adjourned last night with a few issues unresolved that may need attention in a special session, including school levies and offender sentencing measures. Some of the items left undone are

necessary to achieve all of the savings assumed in the budget.

I'm disappointed that the clock ran out before the Legislature completed some of its work, but I don't want it to overshadow the important work they did accomplish.

I plan to meet with legislative leadership soon to determine when to call a special session to address these important issues.

State budget

There is simply no way to sugarcoat the impact of a \$9 billion hole in the state budget. Reductions were required in every aspect of state services to produce a balanced spending plan.

Some of the areas hardest hit in the budget include:

- Health care, where 40,000 fewer people will receive state-subsidized health insurance
- K-12 education, which absorbed cuts in class-size reduction funds, resulting in larger classes for students
- Higher education, which will have to decrease access and increase class sizes
- Human service providers, whose reimbursement rates will be reduced, resulting in less access to services

Programs and services must adjust for significant reductions in “administrative” spending, which means there will be fewer people to

deliver services. I realize this will be hard work, and our employees' skill and dedication will be sorely tested.

Major issues

But the budget isn't all we did in this very tough session — and as a result, I believe we maintained a solid foundation for the future. Individual areas of emphasis from the legislative session included:

Transportation

For transportation, this has to be the most significant legislative session in history bar none. We are building not one, but *two* projects: a deep-bored tunnel to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct and a new 520 Bridge across Lake Washington. What we did is truly monumental — not just for the most-populated part of this state but for Washington's economic future as a whole.

These two projects combined will create nearly 10,500 jobs at the height of construction and will ensure a more mobile economy in the future.

The Legislature passed a \$7.5 billion transportation budget that will create or sustain approximately 20,000 jobs.

The Legislature also moved forward on a long-range strategy to revitalize the ferry service by constructing new vessels while keeping fares affordable.

Economic development

I requested and the Legislature passed help for out-of-work Washingtonians by temporarily extending and increasing unemployment insurance payments. These payments will be spent in businesses across the state, boosting the economy.

Other actions to help ensure the long-term health of Washington's economy include the creation of a new state Department of Commerce to focus on economic development.

Education

The Legislature approved my request to allow the public four-year college and universities to raise tuition by 14 percent and the community and technical colleges by 7 percent in each of the next two years.

These increases are necessary to offset cuts and to maintain quality and access in higher education. We made sure our colleges and universities can continue to prepare our students to succeed in a 21st century economy.

We also laid the groundwork to make sure our K-12 system gives our kids the tools required to compete in the global marketplace.

Environment

Washington kept moving forward to create a platform for an innovative, green economy.

My proposal to exempt the sale of electric vehicle batteries or the installation of electric vehicle infrastructure from retail sales and use tax was passed, which will contribute to a cleaner environment.

Civil Rights

The Legislature also passed multiple measures to ensure fairness for all Washingtonians. The highlights include:

- Expanding the rights and responsibilities of state-registered domestic partners
- Updating hate crimes law to include protections for gender identity and expression
- Ensuring that male and female athletes are accorded equal opportunities to participate in community athletic programs
- Protecting a mother's right to breast-feed in public