



# Report on the 2013 Legislative Session

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For more information contact Bernal Baca at [bbaca@aftwa.org](mailto:bbaca@aftwa.org) or 509.961.7840

Like a game of chess, the first six months of this year was focused on tried-and-true and new strategies for getting our bills passed, as well as advocating for more revenue to fund education and human services. The State Legislature's lengthy 2013 legislative session included a general session and two special sessions -- 153 days in all.

There were numerous challenges. Early on, the balance of power shifted in the Senate when two Democrats, Rodney Tom and Tim Sheldon, defected to form a new Senate Majority Coalition, putting the Republicans in the majority. With this surprise move, nearly all of the Senate committees were chaired by Republicans. We worked hard to establish relationships with and educate legislators on our issues who were not always the decision makers in the past. And we focused on this same strategy in the House. While we were unable to move any of our bills in the Senate, there were a few Representatives who crossed party lines and supported two of our bills – having a labor rep on the community college boards of trustees and faculty increments – as a result of our efforts to build better relationships. Thankfully, we had already developed a working relationship with the new governor, Jay Inslee.

## Two Big Wins for Us This Session

We are pleased that we made some significant gains in this session.

First, the State budget allocated **over \$15 million** funding to the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges to restore 3 percent salary reductions taken during the last two biennia to implement collective bargaining agreements negotiated under chapter 41.80 RCW. The budget also provided **\$8.7 million** for the one-time general reduction in the last biennia to revert back to the district's permanent budget. According to Section 604, Section 4, of the 2013-2014 operating budget, "the colleges may also use the restored funds for any other purpose including restoring prior compensation reductions, increasing compensation, and implementing other collective bargaining agreements." The appropriations act also allows, but does not require, the use of turnover savings for payment of faculty increments. While this is permissive language, it represents a big improvement since this means locals will not have to take buyouts from turnover before funding increments. Locals could bargain the turnover for other types of increases; perhaps, for example, paying adjunct faculty for office hours or for attending meetings. We will be doing further analyses to determine how this impacts locals for the future.

The second major victory is the death of a Senate-initiated proposal (a surprise bill that was passed the week before the session ended and included in their proposed biennium budget) to essentially eliminate health care coverage for public employees, including part-time faculty and classified employees, by moving them from the state’s health care plan and putting them under an undefined health insurance exchange under the federal Affordable Care Act. Thanks to the combined efforts of our lobbying and communication efforts and members sending hundreds of messages to their legislators and key budget leaders, we were able to defeat this unfair proposal that would have been devastating for those who already earn the least.

## Members Stepped Up and Made a Difference



We are deeply grateful for the number of locals and members – even students – who stepped up during this legislative session. Without their response to our many calls to action, we wouldn’t have been able to showcase to



legislators the overwhelming support to provide a voice for labor on our community college Boards of Trustees, to repeal an unfair and rarely used financial emergency law, to highlight the need for and importance of rewarding our faculty for their hard work, to ensure our K-12 classified staff have the resources they need to support our students, or to fight back against an outlandish proposal to change part-time employees’ health benefits.

Through our members’ actions, we were able to gather over **1500 signatures** and **800 emails** for our campaign against changing health benefits, we sent **hundreds of postcards** to key leaders in the House and Senate for all three of our bills, and we made **dozens of phone calls** to push for a budget that supports the needs of our K-12 education system and its hardworking employees.

We want to say a special thank you to the following locals for their diligence and dedication to our legislative actions this year, including postcard events, petition signature gathering, phone calls, and much more!

AFT Everett  
 AFT Renton  
 AFT Seattle  
 AFT Yakima  
 Bates TC  
 Cascadia CC  
 Centralia College  
 Clover Park TC

Edmonds CC  
 Green River CC  
 Federation of Head Start  
 Employees  
 Lake Washington IT  
 Pierce College  
 Renton TC  
 Shoreline CC

Skagit Valley College  
 South Puget Sound CC  
 Tacoma CC  
 Tacoma Federation of ParaEducators  
 United Faculty of Central Washington  
 University  
 UW ELF

## Budget and Revenue Support

Although the budgets in the House and Senate were similar, there was a tug-of-war struggle to determine where the revenue would come from to meet the state's paramount duty to fund basic education as mandated in the *McCleary* decision. The House would not compromise on funding for safety net programs and wanted to raise revenue for basic education by cutting tax loopholes for special interests. The Senate wanted to provide more tax loopholes for business and reduce more of the budget for human services to raise revenue for basic education.

Overall, the final two-year budget spends \$33.5 billion, which represents about a 7% increase in spending over the 2011-13 budget to protect vital state services and fund education, including higher education. On the other hand, the state forecasted \$33.5 billion in (near) General Fund-State revenue. This leaves the two-year constitutionally required rainy day reserve with just over \$630 million.

### **Budget includes more funding for higher education.**

The adopted 2013-15 budget provides **\$119 million** in additional revenue for our state's higher education institutions, including four-year universities, and **\$37 million** for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges from their budget request. The budget does not allocate line-item funding for additional salaries, particularly salary increments, including no funding for I-732 cost-of-living increases for employees in the two-year colleges.



- **HB 1348/SB 5350 Faculty Compensation:** Our bill that would allow bargaining for local funds passed the House and had a great hearing in the Senate, but failed to come to a vote and died in the Senate. While there is no line-item funding for faculty increments at the two-year colleges, there is a proviso in the budget bill that allows the use of turnover savings to provide salary increments for higher education employees and additional one-time money for compensation that we explained earlier.
- **HB 1536:** Requiring a trustee with labor leadership background on community college Boards of Trustees (current law requires this for technical colleges and the SBCTC). This passed the House with bipartisan support, but did not get a committee hearing in the Senate and died.
- **HB 1535:** Repealing the financial emergency law for community and technical colleges. This bill passed out of committee, but we were unable to get the votes needed to pass it out of House Appropriations. It was never brought to a vote on the House floor and there was no companion bill introduced in the Senate this year.

- **SB 5905:** This bill, if passed, would have enacted a law that would have taken away state-covered health insurance from part time employees who were under the PEBB. The bill died and then showed up in the Senate’s budget proposal. Neither passed.
- **Student Achievement: \$10.5 million** was allocated for the Student Achievement Initiative at the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges.
- **Student Tuition:** The budget restricts higher education institutions from increasing resident undergraduate tuition. With only limited tuition increases assumed, the final compromise budget provides **only \$17 million** in additional funding for **student financial aid**. Several financial aid programs were again suspended from giving new awards, saving \$19.1 million in general funds. Current student recipients will not be impacted.
- **Health and Retirement Benefits:** There will be a \$25 surcharge per month for state and higher education PEBB members who smoke or use other tobacco products, and a \$50 per month surcharge to PEBB members who cover a spouse, where the spouse is eligible for coverage in his or her comparable employer health plan. The budget allocates a **\$245 million** increase in employer contribution rates towards PERS 1 and TRS 1 unfunded liabilities.
- **Protected the classified staff from further damaging policy and or budget changes.**
  - **\$129 million** restored for the 1.9% the state cut to compensation in the last two biennia.
  - 3% salary restoration for state classified employees, personal leave day backfill funding, and the creation of salary step “M” (a 2.5% increase).

- **Raised the base reimbursement rate for Working Connections Child Care and support for quality improvement activities through coalition efforts.**

- The Working Connections Child Care increased capacity to serve up to 33,000 families.
- Subsidy rates are increased by 2% (as well as an additional 2% for quality improvement activities to providers at level 2 of Early Achievers).
- Investments were made in home visiting programs that support healthy development for infants and toddlers.
- Increased funding for 1,700 more kids to participate in the state ECEAP and increased per-child reimbursement rates for the second year of the biennium.



## Initiatives We Supported

- **Addressing the opportunity and achievement gap through the work of the Equity in Education Coalition.**

- **\$90 million** to expand full-day Kindergarten to schools, based on free and reduced lunch eligibility, to reach the equivalent of 43.75% of all kindergarten students in the state in both 2013-14 and 2014-15;
  - **\$97 million** to increase the amount of instructional time to allow schools to offer 2.2222 additional hours of instruction per week and 1080 hours per year in grades 7-12 for the 2014-15 school year;
  - **\$132 million** for student transportation funding to incrementally increase to full funding by the 2014-15 school year;
  - **\$374 million** to increase funding for the Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs formulas by \$175 per student in the 2013-14 school year (to \$737.02) and another \$44.70 in the 2014-15 school year (to \$781.72 per student);
  - **\$143 million** to expand funding for the Learning Assistance Program (a nearly 60% increase) to increase the number of instructional hours provided from 1.5156 hours per week to 2.3975 hours per week per FTE student;
  - **\$19 million** to expand funding for the Transitional Bilingual program to increase the hours for students in the program and provide exiting students with services for up to two years following exit; and
  - **\$24 million** to fund parent engagement coordinators in elementary schools, and additional guidance counselors in middle and high schools.
- **Providing funding for the Dream Act HB 1817**  
 This bill would have allowed our young, aspiring citizens to be eligible for the State Need Grant to help them pay for their college education. As we discuss immigration reform at the national level, this bill would have helped create a pathway forward for students to continue their educational achievement here in Washington. It passed with overwhelming support in the House, but the Senate rejected enacting this bill.

**Sine Die!**

opeiu8/afl-cio