

EDUCATION UPDATE



For instance, **SB 5344** would have established a school modernization fund along the lines of the popular and successful public works trust fund that benefits local governments. This would be especially helpful to smaller school districts like those in our 16th Legislative District. It won unanimous approval in the Senate

only to fall short in the House.

Another school-construction bill I sponsored was introduced by a Democratic colleague. **SB 5789** would have modified the School Construction Assistance Program so the state pays sales and use tax on school-construction projects. This too would have been particularly good to smaller school districts. It won overwhelming support in the Senate but also was blocked in the House.

With fuel prices being what they are, I thought **SB 6031** would be an easy “yes” across the Legislature. It basically would allow districts to use whichever form of pupil transportation seems most appropriate – meaning a passenger van could be used instead of a school bus, if it made sense. This bipartisan bill also moved through the Senate with overwhelming support, then the House tried to turn it into a “study” bill. What’s there to study? That caused a stalemate, so school districts still can’t choose a more economical option.

These are all common-sense ideas that deserve another look, and more conversation.

Stay in Touch



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Agriculture/Education Report to the 16th District

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AGRICULTURE/EDUCATION REPORT TO THE 16TH DISTRICT



Dear friends and neighbors,

Those of us who have the honor of serving in the state Legislature take our knowledge and expertise to the state Capitol and apply them to issues facing our state and its people. In my case, that includes more than 40 years of experience in agriculture, and two terms as a county commissioner.

Many lawmakers also develop new public-policy interests after taking office, and for me, education is high on that list. Not only is it the Legislature’s paramount duty under the state constitution, but I’ve really appreciated being on the Senate education committee and digging into early-learning and K-12 issues.

Agriculture and education have important needs that should have been addressed by the Legislature this year. Unfortunately, the legislative session that concluded March 7 produced a mix of results in those categories: delays, questionable moves and fortunately, a great win for parents that will help their school-age children.

Please contact me with questions or concerns about these or any issues. It is a privilege to be *your* state senator.

Sen. Perry Dozier

AGRICULTURE UPDATE



AGRICULTURE SUPPORTS OUR STATE AND ITS PEOPLE

'CULTIVATE WASHINGTON' AGENDA AIMED AT RANGE OF AGRICULTURE CONCERNS

While some bills fly through the lawmaking process within a single legislative session (like my **SB 6238** tax-relief bill did this

year) I've found that filing a piece of legislation is more often about getting a conversation started.

That seems especially true for agriculture-related proposals, as many of my legislative colleagues just don't have a full-enough understanding of how our food gets from the field to the table. This year I helped unveil an agenda we call "Cultivate Washington," to address a variety of front-burner issues facing our state's agricultural sector. Here are a few examples (I encourage you to visit <https://src.wastateleg.org/cultivate-washington> for more detail).



Failed ag-overtime policy still needs to be fixed: The 2024 session was barely two weeks along when a large group of mostly Latino agricultural workers arrived to explain, politely but firmly, that the agricultural-overtime law passed in 2021 isn't working for them the way the supporters had claimed it would.

Their peaceful protest prompted another committee hearing on the bipartisan bill to reform this failed policy – but now it seems obvious that was only for show. After the hearing, **SB 5476** died again, just as it had in 2023.

I have yet to hear my colleagues on the majority side explain why they refuse to fix the ag-overtime law. They also owe unhappy farmworkers an explanation. This issue is not going to work itself out. Together we need to do better in 2025.

Farm-fuel reimbursement offer doesn't make up for broken promise:

Those who imposed the cap-and-trade law on our state in 2021 (officially, the "Climate Commitment Act") promised agriculture and other industries that

SENATOR DOZIER · 16TH DISTRICT



use off-road/farm fuel would be exempt from a fuel surcharge. That turned out to be false.

After cap-and-trade took full effect in 2023 and made farming costs even higher by raising the cost of fuel, I sponsored legislation in 2023 to force the Department of Ecology to stand by the commitment made to farmers and ranchers and

growers. **SB 5728** was not approved, however.

To my surprise, the majority added a \$30 million appropriation to the supplemental operating budget adopted this year, which is supposed to reimburse farm-fuel buyers for the fuel surcharge they should not be paying in the first place. To me that sounds like an admission that the cap-and-trade policy is as harmful as some of us warned.

Even though \$30 million is a lot of money, it still isn't enough to properly reimburse those who buy farm fuel by the tanker. At my request, the budget writers made a change that is somewhat more equitable to the largest purchasers – but the ultimate problem is the cap-and-trade law itself.

Educating for the future of agriculture: As people lose their understanding of how food gets to the table, they are less able to see the harm caused by things such as the move toward banning natural gas in our state, which has dire consequences for food processors as well as many who literally cook food for the table.

If you've heard of efforts to help students become financially literate, then my **SB 5813** will make sense – it's about encouraging "agricultural literacy" for students in grades 7-12. There's also a component in the bill to assist and support the FFA chapters in schools across our state. I appreciate that my bill received a public hearing from our K-12 committee, because now the conversation has started.



I'd also like for the Senate to pass my bill establishing July 10 as "Walla Walla sweet onion day," in conjunction with the city of Walla Walla's long-running Sweet Onion Festival. **SB 5677** has tremendous bipartisan sponsorship and won a committee vote but it needs to come before the full Senate... I'm sure it would pass!



EDUCATION UPDATE



PROVIDING FOR K-12 EDUCATION – OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY

PASSAGE OF PARENTS' RIGHTS INITIATIVE IS HUGE WIN

I've been a strong advocate for protecting and expanding the rights of parents to know how their children are being educated, and introduced

a bill to that effect each of my years in the Senate.

I did not expect my parents' rights bill would apparently serve as inspiration for a voter initiative. However, once **Initiative 2081** was certified to the Legislature I chose to put my bill (**SB 5024**) aside and instead get behind the initiative, seeing how it was supported by 454,000 voter signatures and would expand the transparency and accountability provisions in my legislation.

I successfully asked the chair of our K-12 education committee to hold a public hearing on I-2081. That was followed by a "yes" vote from a majority on the committee, and on March 4 both the Senate and House passed the measure. The law it creates will take effect June 6.

As providing for the education of our children is state government's number-one responsibility, there is every reason to make sure parents have access to important information about the educational services being delivered to their children. This should connect parents and our public schools in a more productive and open way, and I could not be happier that I-2081 won such strong bipartisan approval.

SCHOOL-INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORTATION PROPOSALS WOULD HAVE ADDRESSED IMPORTANT K-12 NEEDS

While bills like my **SB 5813** involve what happens in the classroom, I am keenly aware that providing for our schools should include the classrooms themselves, and other school buildings, and ensuring our students get to and from school. It's disappointing that legislation I sponsored toward those needs was passed by the Senate but did not make it into law.

