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Second—All new taxes should require a 2/3s vote of the legislature or approval by a vote of

general population in a November election.

Third—Tax dollars that come to the government above the fiscal

growth rate of population plus inflation should be returned to the people via a reduction in property taxes and/or a reduction in the state sales tax.

Fourth—We need to secure our borders and stop encouraging people to come to Washington illegally. Tens of thousands of brave men and women defend our borders with the Customs and Border Patrol. This is dangerous work. Yet Washington state offers rewards to those who enter our county illegally. A walk down any Main Street from Bellingham to Seattle to Spokane will highlight that we need to do a better job taking care of those who are here now; and not import more people directly into the welfare system.

Fifth—Our schools need to

teach the greatness of America and the greatness of Americans. Our schools need to teach the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the unique attributes that make America the greatest nation in the world. At the current time we are importing people from all over the world who do not understand the founding of America and our schools all too often teach that America is evil, corrupt, and imperialistic. It is no wonder that pride in America is declining when you look at our immigration policies and our public schools.

As the President Ronald Reagan said our freedoms are not passed down through our DNA. It is up to each generation to guard, protect, and pass on our freedoms to the next generation.

## Who Pays for ‘Free College’?



Rep. Luanne Van Werven

During this last legislative session Democrats in Olympia raised multiple taxes on Washingtonians. Perhaps the most egregious tax increase is a surcharge levied on the business and occupation (B&O) tax in order to provide “free college” for students.

First and foremost, the “free college” scheme is not free. It will cost Washington taxpayers \$1 billion as more than 80,000 service-orientated businesses will be hit with the B&O tax increase. This will add to the heavy tax burden for many employers in our state, and they will likely have no choice but to pass the new costs along to consumers.

The intent of the legislation, House Bill 2158, was to address our state’s need for more STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) degrees. However, there are no sideboards that require tuition funding be

applied to students in STEM fields. In fact, the only degree a student cannot get for free is theology, every other degree is fair game.

We can all agree higher education should be more accessible and affordable. This plan will not do that because there is no incentive for colleges to reduce costs with a “free college” plan in place. Many universities continue to increase their budgets without much transparency or accountability to the Legislature or the taxpayers. Without that accountability, the costs to attend college continue to be much more expensive.

This policy will hit the middle class hardest, to the point they may not be able to afford to send their own children to college. Under this bill, most middle-class families will not qualify for state financial aid which means they’ll take out more loans to cover college expenses.

The best plan is to reduce costs for all students. The greatest obstacles to higher-education attainment are the costs of college as a whole, including textbooks, class fees, and housing. Let us find a way to reduce those costs instead of growing government spending with another entitlement program. We cannot subsidize our way to college affordability.

Rep. Luanne Van Werven represents the 42nd Legislative District. She serves as the ranking member on the College and Workforce Development Committee.

## Banner Year for Washington



Rep. Sharon Shewmake

This has been a banner year for Washington, with our economy taking the #1 spot for strongest economy in the country. Much of this growth is happening in Seattle, and I went to Olympia this year with the goal of making sure that Whatcom County isn’t left out of the discussion.

We had a productive legislative session and I’m proud to report that we had some huge bipartisan wins. We made forward-thinking investments in building up our workforce by improving access to affordable childcare and ensuring every kid can pursue a college degree, no matter how much their parents make.

Herein Whatcom County, we’re tackling our over-incarceration issue that wastes money and ruins lives. Part of this was securing \$1 million to fund a new “crisis stabilization facility” in Whatcom County that will save taxpayer money while solving a dilemma law enforcement currently faces when they pick up a person having a mental health crisis. The current options are jail or the emergency room, when what the person really needs is mental healthcare. Now they’ll get it.

I’m especially pleased with a bill we passed that takes decisions about which toxic chemicals to regulate away from the Legislature and, instead, gives the responsibility to our best scientists. This is smart science-based policy.

I was disappointed that we didn’t invest more in early learning, which is proven to be one of the best ways to break cycles of poverty. I’m going to work hard on this next year. I’m also excited about a bill I’m writing that will help utilities fix gas leaks in cities. This would be a triple win: safer communities; more jobs for pipefitters and technicians; and less methane pollution. I plan to introduce the bill in January, when the 2020 legislative session starts.

