REPRESENTATIVE JOE SCHMICK * REPRESENTATIVE MARY DYE

9TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT * 2026 SESSION REVIEW

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Appropriations

Health Care and Wellness
(Ranking Republican)

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Capital Budget

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(Ranking Republican)

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The 2026 legislative session concluded March 12 after 60 days, and a grueling final stretch that included a more than 24-hour House floor debate over a proposed state income tax.

This session highlighted a growing divide between policies pushed by majority Democrats in Olympia and the priorities of rural Washington. Families here are focused on affordability, economic opportunity and preserving a way of life built on hard work and independence.

We worked on your behalf, brought your voice to the table and engaged in strong debates to push back on proposals that would have increased costs on families, energy and everyday goods. While some of those efforts were successful, many policies adopted this session continue to grow government without addressing the affordability challenges people are facing.

We will continue working to bring forward solutions that reflect the priorities of our communities.

Sincerely,

Rep. Joe Schmick

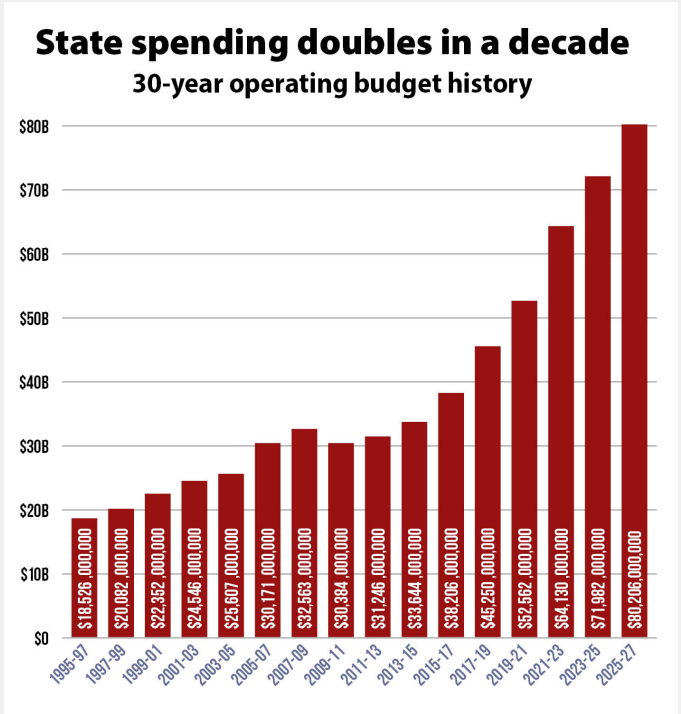
Rep. Mary Dye

FIGHTING RECORD SPENDING AND AN INCOME TAX

During the final days of session, we, along with our fellow House Republican colleagues, spent more than 24 hours debating **Senate Bill 6346**, a proposal by majority Democrats to create a state income tax. We voted no.

Nearly 80 amendments were offered, including more than 50 from Republicans, to protect taxpayers and require accountability, but majority Democrats rejected most of our attempts to change the bill. At the same time, Democrats approved a supplemental operating budget totaling more than **$80.2 billion**, increasing spending by **$2.3 billion** and spending **$4.9 billion** more than projected revenue.

The budget relies on fund shifts from the state's rainy-day fund, taking money away from the local infrastructure loan account used for water and sewer system repairs/improvements (Public Works Trust Fund), and raiding LEOFF 1 firefighters' and law enforcement officers' pension-related dollars to support ongoing spending. Those budgeting moves are very concerning. Despite serving on the House Appropriations Committee, we were shut out of the final budget-writing process. Even with new taxes, this approach puts the state on track for another budget shortfall in 2027.



REPRESENTATIVE JOE SCHMICK

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES, BUT MORE WORK LIES AHEAD

Two bills I sponsored this year were passed into law. One measure allows businesses with a snack bar liquor license to offer wine by the glass in addition to beer. It is a small change, but it gives local establishments more flexibility in how they serve their customers.

The second bill addresses a challenge rural hospitals and ambulance services face when transferring patients between facilities. It allows registered nurses without EMT certification to assist with certain specialty transports, provided an EMT remains present, and other safety requirements are met.

Both ideas came directly from conversations with people working in our communities who were looking for practical solutions to real-world challenges. However, not every good idea makes it across the finish line the first time, but that doesn't mean you give up on it.

Rep. Joe Schmick talks with cattle ranchers during "Beef Day at the Capitol."

I worked on several bills aimed at protecting rural health care and our agricultural communities that did not pass. One focused on charity care, making sure limited resources are available to low-income Washington residents rather than to folks coming in from out of state. In rural areas, when a hospital is already running lean, there is no backup down the street if things go sideways and local hospitals end up picking up the tab..

Another bill dealt with rural emergency hospitals and how Medicaid payments are handled. These facilities are often the only place to get emergency care for miles, so we need funding decisions that are steady, predictable and make sense.

While these didn't pass, they are not going away. I will keep working with folks back home and across the state to get them right and bring them back next session.

PROTECTING FARMS AND FARMERS

Agriculture is the backbone of our rural communities. It is facing real challenges that deserve serious attention.

One bipartisan proposal we worked on this session focused on protecting working farmland by ensuring it stays in production and increasing transparency around conservation district land purchases. Farmers need to farm, and the public deserves clear information about how land and resources are being used.

Today, many farmers are under intense pressure from rising production costs driven by energy transformation policies, market uncertainty and regulatory burdens. In Washington, some labor costs have increased by as much as 185%, making it harder for farmers to compete in a global market. Farming is not just a job. It is a way of life, often passed down through generations, but is being strained by forces largely outside a farmer's control.

Across Washington, farms continue to disappear as costs outpace returns. The state now ranks last in the nation in net farm income, with losses of billions of dollars. In some cases, that strain contributes to mental health struggles among generational farmers, and sadly, even suicide. These are issues that must be addressed to keep agriculture viable in the future.

We will continue working to restore a competitive environment for Washington agriculture by addressing policies that increase costs, weaken our position in global markets and drive farmers out of the industry.

Read more online: https://marydye.houserepublicans.wa.gov/2026/03/20/open-letter-washingtons-farm-crisis/

REPRESENTATIVE MARY DYE

PROTECTING JOBS, AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND OUR RURAL WAY OF LIFE

Rep. Mary Dye discusses legislation with House Republican Floor Leader April Connors, R-Kennewick.

As ranking Republican on the House Environment and Energy Committee, I focused on protecting families, farmers and small businesses from policies advanced by majority Democrats that would increase costs and expand government overreach.

In the minority, success is often measured not by how many bills you can pass, but by the harmful and potentially devastating bills you can stop. We stopped **Senate Bill 5360**, which would have created new felony crimes tied to complex environmental regulations. We also helped defeat the "billion-dollar tax on groceries" proposal in **House Bill 1607** and pushed back on policies that would increase household costs.

We blocked new electric bill surcharges, including **House Bill 2373**, which would have required ratepayers to fund low-income energy assistance programs, matching the expensive programs in Seattle, which have caused their utility bills to rise. We also fought off a proposed California-style wildfire utility surcharge **(House Bill 2275)** that would have increased power bills while enriching civil litigation attorneys. At a time of rising energy prices, these policies would have further increased electric bills for many families. I also opposed **House Bill 2515**, which targeted data centers and threatened rural jobs. The bill died in the Senate, preventing those jobs and investments from leaving Washington.

We brought your concerns directly into committee rooms and floor debates – working to protect jobs and keep costs down – a hard task given the number of additional burdens placed on citizens to fund our bloated government. I will continue working to keep life affordable for our families. It is a fight worth continuing.

Read more online: https://marydye.houserepublicans.wa.gov/2026/03/06/stopping-harmful-polices/

ENSURING CITIZENS ARE HEARD

Two citizen initiatives will go before voters this fall after majority Democrats declined to act.

One would strengthen the Parents' Bill of Rights, ensuring access to student records and affirming parents' role in decisions affecting their children. The other would protect fairness in girls' sports by ensuring participation is based on biological sex.

Because Democrats refused to hold public hearings on the initiatives – despite being constitutionally obligated to give them the highest legislative priority – House Republicans held listening sessions in Olympia to ensure citizens on both sides of the issue could be heard. These initiatives deserved legislative debate, but will now be decided by voters.

Rep. Mary Dye and Rep. Joe Schmick attended listening sessions on two citizen initiatives.

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9th Legislative District
2026 Session Review

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CAPITAL BUDGET INVESTMENTS

The supplemental capital budget invests **$890 million statewide**, including more than **$32.1 million for projects in the 9th District**.

Rep. Mary Dye serves on the House Capital Budget Committee. Together, we helped secure funding for projects supporting schools, infrastructure and economic development.

Key projects include:

- Palouse school construction — $6 million
- Washington State University infrastructure and research — more than $8.9 million
- Eastern Washington University preservation and solar project — more than $11.1 million
- Reardan-Edwall School District improvements — $1.87 million
- Garfield school improvements — $1.43 million
- Othello water projects — more than $1.6 million
- Adams County public safety building — $258,000
- Dayton community pool — $275,000