

State bank would keep Washington dollars working for the people

OLYMPIA – A bill to create the Washington Investment Trust, a publicly-owned depository for our tax revenue, was introduced to the Legislature this week by Sen. Bob Hasegawa, D-Seattle.

“The Washington Investment Trust will keep taxpayer dollars in our state working for Washingtonians instead of Wall Street,” Hasegawa said. “It will generate revenue, but also save money and provide public financing options by loaning money to ourselves rather than going through big banks and bond brokers. We could boost local economies, invest in infrastructure like clean water and sewer projects and even provide loans for students and small businesses. Currently, the state sets aside over \$1 billion per year in our operating budget for debt service, much of which is profit to Wall Street. Instead of paying profits to bankers, we could be borrowing from and repaying ourselves.”

Senate Bill 5464 is modelled after the successful Bank of North Dakota (BND), which has successfully implemented its economic development and public support mission for almost a hundred years. The BND reported its 12th consecutive year of record profits for the state, which includes the period through the great recession and the ups and downs of the oil markets.

“In a time when we need to be fully funding education, this proposal puts state money back where it is most needed,” Hasegawa added.

Hasegawa has introduced similar measures in previous sessions but the bills have faced severe opposition from the banking lobby, which has successfully killed the bills in the legislative banking committees.