



## Washington State Legislature

February 11, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Senator Andy Billig  
Senate Majority Leader  
307 Legislative Building  
P.O. Box 40403  
Olympia, WA 98504

Representative Laurie Jinkins  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
339C Legislative Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee, Senator Billig, and Speaker Jinkins:

We are frequently asked by constituents and other concerned citizens, as you likely are: Why is there still a fence around the Legislative Building? We believe the leaders of the five corners have an obligation to provide an answer to Washingtonians.

Everyone agrees the security of our Capitol campus – including its buildings, employees, visitors, and the media – is critically important. Everyone also agrees the security breach at the governor's mansion grounds was unacceptable. However, what is not clear to us is what inputs and assessments are being used to justify the continued use of the fence around the Legislative Building – a barrier that prevents people from experiencing their Capitol campus and sends the wrong message about their access to the legislative process. We believe the existence of this fence does not respect the fundamental rights of the people.

Let us not forget: It is the people's Legislative Building, not ours. The people sent us there to work on their behalf on a temporary basis.

We are asking that you work with us to find security solutions and protocols that safeguard our Capitol campus in comprehensive ways, but do not rely on fences and do not inhibit the public's access to their Legislative Building. This will likely include both policy and funding considerations.

We understand our state continues to battle a pandemic. However, the governor has advanced Thurston and four surrounding counties to Phase 2 of the Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery plan. This fact should be taken into consideration as we seek to balance security needs with people’s access to their Capitol campus. It is our responsibility to protect the fundamental rights of the people – including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and right to petition the government – even in the most of challenging times, including a pandemic.

With the preceding information in mind, we ask that you:

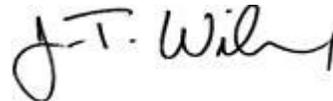
- Take the fence around the Legislative Building down as soon as possible. If not, share with us, the public, and the media what inputs and assessments are being used to justify its continued existence.
- Enact temporary security protocols as the five corners – in concert with the Washington State Patrol, Enterprise Services, Secretary of State, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, and a representative from the press houses – develop and implement long-term security protocols that protect the Capitol campus without inhibiting the public’s access to it.
- Allow people to peacefully assemble outside on the grounds of the Capitol campus, including the steps of the Legislative Building, so they can be seen and heard as important decisions are made this legislative session.
- Clearly define Phase 3 in the Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery plan. Specifically, explain how Thurston County can advance and allow greater access to the Capitol campus and legislative process. This includes people’s access to public spaces inside the Legislative Building, such as the rotunda and respective chamber galleries, with proper masking and social distancing. As coronavirus numbers improve and vaccines are administered, there is still a lot of time left in the legislative session. We must provide people maximum access to the legislative decisions that will impact their lives.
- Advocate for open government and trust the people of Washington state.

We look forward to your response and welcome a meeting with you to discuss the issues we have outlined.

Sincerely,



Senator John Braun  
Senate Republican Leader



Representative J.T. Wilcox  
House Republican Leader