

# Our priorities and agenda

**Our priorities:** <https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/our-priorities/>

- Safely getting Washingtonians back to work, school, and a more normal life
- Standing up for families by opposing unnecessary tax increases that ultimately hurt our state's most vulnerable, including any form of an income tax, and working to make life more affordable
- Holding government accountable, fighting for transparency, and shedding light on mismanagement – especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Strengthening communities by providing appropriate resources for vital mental health services, working to end the homelessness crisis, and supporting effective community policing
- Reining in the governor's unilateral emergency powers and ensuring public engagement in all aspects of the legislative process

**Priority: Safely getting Washingtonians back to work, school, and a more normal life**

- The governor's myopic response to the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated parts of our economy and created a persistent feeling of frustration and hopelessness for communities across our state. His shutdown orders led to the closure of thousands of small businesses, many of which will never reopen.
- Meanwhile, parents have struggled with childcare and students have fallen behind academically in the face of prolonged school closures.
- Additionally, these shutdowns have exacerbated problems related to mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and more.
- We are amplifying these forgotten voices in the legislative arena and fighting to safely get people back to work, school, and a more normal life in 2021.

**Priority: Standing up for families by opposing unnecessary tax increases that ultimately hurt our state's most vulnerable, including any form of an income tax, and working to make life more affordable**

- As families and employers attempt to recover from the economic devastation caused by COVID-19, the governor and majority party are pushing for punitive and unnecessary tax increases. These proposals would make health care, gasoline, and home energy more expensive.
- They are also pushing for an unpredictable income tax on capital gains, which is unconstitutional. Washingtonians have repeatedly rejected tax increases and we stand with them.
- We are advocating for tax relief and a [responsible operating budget](#) that prioritizes struggling families, students, vulnerable people, and small businesses.

**Priority: Holding government accountable, fighting for transparency, and shedding light on mismanagement – especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

- The costs of significant failures in state government overseen by the governor and his appointees include:
  - A slow, inefficient, and bureaucratic state vaccination plan that included several missteps.
  - The Employment Security Department's inability to prevent massive fraud and deliver timely unemployment benefits.
  - Data breaches.
  - Early release of prisoners.
  - Cost overruns for transportation projects.
  - Decertification of Western State Hospital.
  - Heartbreaking outcomes for children in our foster care system.
- Some of these failures have meant fewer resources for communities in need. We are holding the governor and his state agencies accountable and working to restore the public's trust by increasing oversight and implementing reforms that improve outcomes.

**Priority: Strengthening communities by providing appropriate resources for vital mental health services, working to end the homelessness crisis, and supporting effective community policing**

- If communities are going to have an opportunity to thrive, we must help people facing chronic homelessness, addiction, crime, and untreated mental health needs. Rather than addressing the root causes of these problems, destructive policies have left our law enforcement professionals without needed support.
- With a focus on compassion and accountability, we are working to keep our streets, neighborhoods, and families safe while respecting those who serve and protect our communities.

**Priority: Reining in the governor's unilateral emergency powers and ensuring public engagement in all aspects of the legislative process**

- The power to create laws belongs to the Legislature and the people. To grapple with time-sensitive emergency situations, the Legislature has granted a portion of its lawmaking power to the governor. Riots, enemy attack, weather disasters, and the like require a rapid response, but the lawmaking authority granted to the governor must have limits. The people of Washington state should not be ruled by proclamations and unilateral orders.
- Meaningful participation in the legislative process is critical to the success of our state. We must remove any barriers for the single mother, the farmworker, the small business owner, and all Washingtonians to have a voice in the decisions made in the Legislature. Learn more: [How you can be involved in the legislative process](#)

## Top messages by House committee

### Appropriations | Nick

1. Tax collections are up nearly 10%, yet the governor is still proposing a litany of new taxes that will make driving, working, and living more expensive for working families.
2. Instead of a tax-and-spend approach to budgeting, our budget should be driven by data and success should be based on outcomes, not dollars spent.
3. We can pass a budget this session that is balanced, funds our priorities, and avoids cuts to critical services—all without raising taxes or hampering our recovery.

### Capital Budget | Kelley

1. In the aftermath of the pandemic, capital budget priorities should be laser-focused on local infrastructure that encourages private development, business growth and job creation.
2. We need to take advantage of direct funding opportunities on shovel-ready projects.
3. Affordable housing growth should come from targeted state-funded investments that allow for private development.

### Children, Youth & Families | Kurt

1. Families are struggling to find high quality and affordable childcare. We need to take a hard look at what government regulations are negatively and unnecessarily burdening providers. We have an opportunity to create a better environment for businesses to thrive and create affordable, accessible childcare options for our working families.
2. Our foster care system is in crisis and it has been compounded by the pandemic. We need to find solutions to increase housing, recruitment, and retention in our foster care system.
3. This is a difficult time for many children and young people in our state due to the pandemic. We need make sure mental health services for our youth are accessible and are operating efficiently and effectively.

### **Civil Rights & Judiciary | Kelley**

1. It is the first duty of every elected state representative to protect the constitutional rights of all Washingtonians, including due process, the right to peaceful assembly, free speech, and the right to bear arms.
2. There has never been a more dangerous time to be a police officer than now. We must do everything we can to protect those who protect us.
3. On a local and state level, calls to restrict law enforcement stem from the assumption that a few officers involved in misconduct mean that all police are bad. In order to have a conversation about reform that produces real results, this bias must end.
  - a. Supporting law enforcement is a top priority for Republicans. Any discussion about these community servants must include their willingness to serve others in a capacity few would venture into.
  - b. If approved, bills targeted at removing law enforcement access to equipment used to save lives and protect community members would have dire consequences.

### **College & Workforce Development | Nick**

1. Not everyone needs a four-year degree to have a successful, rewarding career and earn a family living wage. We must continue developing new approaches to education and on-the-job training that prepare students for well-paying jobs in various career fields, such as the trades, manufacturing, and technology.
2. We must find ways to make college more affordable, not just provide more taxpayer funding or force students to take out more student loans.
3. We must increase transparency and accountability at the state's higher education institutions to ensure students and taxpayers are getting what they paid for in a timely manner.

### **Commerce & Gaming | Nick**

1. We must ease licensing restrictions that are putting pressure on businesses already struggling due to the governor's lockdown orders.

### **Community & Economic Development | Nick**

1. We must rebuild our economy by growing living-wage jobs across the state, not just in major urban centers.
2. We want to provide grants to local governments in rural counties so major projects – sewer, water, stormwater, recycling, broadband, etc. – can move forward. These projects would help revitalize our communities, many of which are faced with crumbling infrastructure.
3. We have an ambitious goal of doubling manufacturing jobs in Washington by 2030. We also want to double the number of small and minority-owned business in the manufacturing space.

### **Consumer Protection & Business | Kent**

1. Making Washington State more business friendly and allowing individuals and businesses pursue their goals by reducing the number of rules and regulations.
2. People's livelihoods are at stake. We want to protect our state's "Main Street" businesses and allow them to open up and get back to work.
3. We want to reduce the number of occupational licensing barriers and requirements that hold individuals and businesses back, including new residents from other states.

### **Education | Kelley**

1. Keeping schools closed does irrevocable harm to children developmentally, educationally and emotionally. It not only deprives children of instruction, but access to social services.
2. Education is an essential service. That's why it's critical the Legislature chart a path to safely reopening public and private schools as soon as possible.
3. Public and private school staff, administrators and teachers need to be given the opportunity to receive the coronavirus vaccine as soon as possible.
4. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. That's why we must do all we can to close the student opportunity gap.

### **Environment & Energy | Sattgast**

1. We are prioritizing a healthier urban environment, with less urban storm and sewer runoff to salmon-bearing streams.
2. When adopting energy policies, we believe a framework must be in place that works to reduce the cost of people's power and natural gas bills, lowers the number of people in need of energy assistance, and makes electrical and natural gas costs affordable for all Washingtonians.
3. Democrats continue to add to the cost of energy and fuel, creating more burdens for struggling Washington families and small businesses barely hanging on.

### **Finance | Handy**

1. We are focused on protecting the taxpayer.
2. Our state has enough tax collections (revenue) to pay for its priorities. The Legislature does not need to raise taxes on any person or business.
3. If anything, state lawmakers should be looking for ways to ease the tax burdens on individuals and families – especially as our state attempts to recover.

### **Health Care & Wellness | Brendon**

1. Ensuring consumers have affordable choices for their health care needs to matter where they live.
2. Promoting transparency in health care costs and services.
3. Empowering people to have control over their health care decisions.

### **Housing, Human Services & Veterans | Sattgast**

1. The cost of housing and construction is driven up when land-use and building codes are made more complex, creating more barriers.

### **Labor & Workplace Standards | Nick**

1. In the middle of a global pandemic, we must find ways to ease the onerous burdens businesses are facing, including significant unemployment tax increases.
2. Now is not the time to increase taxes or regulatory burdens on small businesses. We must work to ensure they can survive and hopefully expand to provide more employment opportunities for Washingtonians.
3. The cost of losing employers is high. Without employers, there are no employees, more citizens rely on government programs, and less revenue exists for the state to provide essential services.

### **Local Government | Kurt**

1. State government continues to introduce legislation that increases costs for local governments – GMA, zoning, building codes – while not providing adequate funding to cover the mandated rules and regulations.
2. Our local governments are qualified to make their own decisions on how they function and manage issues such growth management, public health and safety, elections, and indigent defense without mandates created by people in Olympia that may never have even driven through the community the legislation is meant to change. Our members must consistently have discussions about how rural counties do not have the same problems as urban areas.
3. Our local governments are continually face with unfunded mandates, and rules and regulations imposed by the state, but are expected to be fiscally responsible and offer the core functions of local government despite having a one percent cap on property tax growth every year.

### **Public Safety | Jenn**

1. One thing we will never support: Defunding the police, or any newly branded variation of it.
2. We represent communities that revere law enforcement and understand their importance in the community.
3. There are unfortunately some bad police officers. They need to be held accountable for their actions. But, a vast majority of police officers are good public servants and deserve our support.
4. Few professions require someone to put their life on the line and make split-second decisions that impact people's lives, while keeping our families and communities safe.

## Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources | Kurt

1. Access to water is a fundamental right. To ensure there is enough water for farms, families, fish, wildlife, and our marine ecosystem it is crucial that we properly manage and preserve our water resources to ensure quality and volume while being good stewards of the environment.
2. We need to focus our efforts on preserving forests, farmland, and rural communities from catastrophic wildfires by promoting forest health and properly managing our forests.
3. The COVID pandemic has created new challenges for our ag industry. We need ensure our ag industry can continue to provide fresh food to families, with a safe, stable, and sustainable workforce.

## State Government & Tribal Relations | Brendon

1. Reexamining and reining in the governor's "emergency powers" while maintaining the Legislature's constitutional role.
2. Restoring trust in our election system.
3. Working to bring accountability, transparency, and sufficient public oversight to state government.

## Transportation | Jenn

1. We need to focus on finishing the projects we've promised and started, including prioritizing preservation and maintenance.
2. We agree additional funding needs to be put towards maintaining our state's aging transportation infrastructure, but our solutions are to reprioritize funds within our existing revenue.
3. Social justice and equity are not satisfied when we place a higher burden on those who can least afford paying higher taxes and transitioning to electric modes of transportation.

# 2021-23 operating budget proposal

## 2021-23 operating budget framework

### Links:

- [2021-23 Operating Budget Framework | Caucus web page](#)
- [News conference for rollout | February 16, 2021](#)
- [Real Opportunities for All Washingtonians | Funding Priorities](#)
- [2021-23 Biennial Operating Budget Proposal | Presentation](#)
- [House 2021-23 Biennium Operating Budget Proposals | Fiscal.wa.gov](#)

### Messaging:

- This proposal represents real solutions and real opportunities for all Washingtonians.
- Funding priorities include working families, students, vulnerable people, and small businesses.
- This proposal does not raise taxes on anyone or anything and does not cut vital services.
- This proposal appropriates \$1.8B from the rainy-day fund to pay for one-time, COVID-related expenses.
- This proposal represents savings, efficiencies, and rational decision-making, including \$6.2B in savings items. This includes reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, fixing inefficient structures, eliminating programs that aren't working, and replacing bad policies with better ones.
- This proposal includes legislative-driven savings policies identified as part of a zero-based budget review conducted over six months, when Republicans were calling and preparing for a special session.
- This proposal breaks a cycle of unsustainable spending increases, which averaged 16% over three biennia.

### Working families

- Funds the Working Families Tax Credit for the first time in its 12-year history (\$600M)
- Sales tax exemption for basic necessities, like prepared food and diapers (\$293M)
- \$300 stipends to low-income families to defray cost of remote learning (\$160M)
- Grants and higher rates for childcare providers; copay assistance for families (\$114M)

### **Students**

- Learning “catch up,” prioritized for historically disadvantaged populations (\$500M)
- Increased federal allocations to school districts, contingent on reopening (\$156M)
- Equitable enrichment funding for charter and tribal schools (\$44M)
- Additional STEM enrollment slots at state universities and community colleges (\$30M)

### **Vulnerable people**

- Flexible, ongoing homelessness funding for cities and counties that clean up encampments near schools, parks, and playgrounds, and ban injection sites (\$736M)
- Rate increases for providers of DD/LTC, behavioral health and primary care (\$430M)
- Investments in community behavioral health, triple the governor’s proposal (\$225M)
- Additional funding for testing, PPE, and infection control at DD/LTC facilities (\$120M)

### **Small businesses**

- Replenishes UI fund to replace fraud losses and mitigates skyrocketing UI taxes (\$500M)
- Temporary B&O tax relief for restaurants and other hard-hit businesses (\$94M)
- Boosts funding for the state’s tourism marketing campaign (\$12M)
- Authorizes B&O, property tax and liquor fee deferrals for small businesses

### **All of Washington**

- Additional funds for foundational public health without taxing health insurance (\$300M)
- Funds DNR’s forest health management plan, reducing wildfires and pollution (\$260M)
- Maximizes production at state and tribal hatcheries to support fish populations (\$12M)

## **Bills and issues**

### **Government accountability**

- Our state’s vaccine distribution rollout was a failure.
- ESD’s failure to prevent massive fraud and deliver important unemployment benefits to struggling Washingtonians represent failures in our state’s pandemic response.
- The governor and Democrats have overseen major failures in state government — including the early release of prisoners, cost overruns for transportation projects, data breaches, decertification of Western State Hospital, and heart-breaking outcomes for children in our foster care system.
- Holding state government accountable has been a House Republican priority for years.

### **Environment**

- House Republicans are active stewards of the environment, with members that are, or have been, reliant on the health of the land as farmers, ranchers, beekeepers, etc.
- While we may disagree on certain policy proposals that are highly speculative and likely to negatively impact the finances of Washington families, we are fully committed to being locally and globally responsible stewards of our environment.
- Republicans have supported solutions when they are balanced and actually address problems:
  - Cleaning up toxic sites, removing legacy nets, dealing with derelict vessels, clearing fish passage, ensuring oil-train safety, and combatting pharmaceutical and synthetic runoff.
- If our state wants to reduce carbon, it should start by managing public forests and reducing traffic congestion.

### **Homelessness**

- We must address the root causes of homelessness: Drug addiction, mental health, economic despair, and lack of affordable housing.
- Seattle is Dying and the follow up, have taught us that enforcement and intervention are the keys.
- We cannot continue with the same programs and services if they continue to produce the same failed results.

### **Income tax on capital gains**

- Unpopular. Voters have told us several times over the years that they don't want any type of income tax.
- Unreliable. We know this type of revenue can be volatile and would discourage investment in our state.
- Unconstitutional. This new tax would be challenged in the courts and likely be struck down.
- The IRS calls it an income tax because it is, in fact, a tax on income.
- Make no mistake: This will be a big step toward a state income tax.

### **Low-carbon fuel standard mandate | House Bill 1091**

- It is regressive and hurts low-income individuals and families.
- Provides little benefit to the environment and air quality.
- Is bad for businesses and our economy.
- Increases the cost of gas and diesel without generating any new revenue for transportation projects.

### **Police officer tactics and equipment | House Bill 1054**

- It's no longer about defunding the police. It's about disarming them.
- We cannot take away the tools officers rely on to deescalate situations and avoid the necessity to use deadly force.
- Our officers are already held to a very high standard. We cannot make that standard an impossible one.
- We need to focus on real solutions that will bridge the gap of the already fragile relationship between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve, not widen it.
- If we aren't safe in our communities, then nothing else matters. Law enforcement officers keep us safe.

### **Public safety**

- House Republicans believe we should be spending more money on law enforcement, not less, including training, mental health resources, school resource officers, and community outreach.-
- You should feel safe in your home. You should feel safe in your community. Kids should feel safe in schools.
- Few professions require someone to put their life on the line and make split-second decisions that impact people's lives, while keeping our families and communities safe.
- The role of our law enforcement officers is to protect and serve their communities. We need to work on finding solutions that bridge the current gap between officers and how their communities feel they are being protected and served.
- It is our role as state legislators to remember that we cannot approach our gaps in the public safety system with only a top-down approach. This does not create trust and respect between law enforcement and their communities. Not every issue can be resolved with legislation.
- We represent communities that revere law enforcement and understand their importance in the community. We see what Seattle, Portland and even Olympia police must deal with daily and it's heartbreaking.
- Seattle city leaders have chosen to ignore crimes and pervasive problems. This permissive culture has led to crime, chaos, businesses leaving, and people feeling unsafe. We do not want this to spread across the state.
- Seattle should be a place that attracts people. But it now has a well-earned reputation for homelessness, property crime, rioting, and anarchists. Meanwhile, many Democrats act like the biggest problem is the police.
- One thing we will never support: Defunding the police ... or any newly branded variation of it. And we believe a vast majority of Washingtonians agree with us.
- There are unfortunately some bad police officers. And they need to be held accountable for their actions. But a vast majority of police officers are good public servants and deserve our support.

### **REAL Recovery for Washington Act**

- The REAL Recovery for Washington Act is a comprehensive, \$4 billion relief package that would help families, students, schools, and businesses recover. It would utilize the state's rainy-day fund and federal funds and not create unsustainable spending obligations in future operating budgets.
- <https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2021/01/19/real-recovery-for-washington-act/>
- <http://drewstokesbary.houserepublicans.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2021/01/REAL-Recovery-Act-Summary.pdf>

# Facts and links

## Facts

- The operating budget funds: K-12 education, higher education, corrections, human services and other operations.
  - Funded by: State taxes (sales tax, property tax and B&O tax), federal funds, tuition and other sources.
- The transportation budget funds: Capital projects, operating programs and debt service.
  - Funded by: Fuel taxes, license fees, tolls, bonds and federal funding.
- The capital budget funds: K-12 school construction, higher education facilities, mental and behavioral health, Public Works Assistance Account, housing and community projects.
  - Funded by: General obligation bonds, dedicated cash accounts, federal funds and financing contracts.
- Property taxes
  - Property taxes are determined by a state property tax rate, what taxes local jurisdictions have enacted (school districts, city, county, fire districts, Sound Transit, etc.) and changes in a property's assessed value.

## Links

- 1-800-562-6000 (Legislative Hotline)
- TVW | [tvw.org](http://tvw.org)
- Fiscal information | [fiscal.wa.gov](http://fiscal.wa.gov)
- Washington State Legislature | [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)
- Office of Financial Management | [ofm.wa.gov](http://ofm.wa.gov)
- Economic and Revenue Forecast Council | [erfc.wa.gov](http://erfc.wa.gov)
- Washington State Legislature | <https://leg.wa.gov/>
- How a bill becomes a law | <https://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Bill2Law.aspx>
- Accessing the Legislature remotely  
<https://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Documents/2020/Accessing%20the%20Legislature%20remotely.pdf>
- COVID-19 Session Operations Plan for the Washington State House of Representatives  
<https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2020/12/14/covid-19-session-operations-plan-for-the-washington-state-house-of-representatives/>
- The Ledger – A legislative news aggregator | <https://waledger.houserepublicans.wa.gov/>
- The Capitol Buzz | <https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/stay-connected/capitol-buzz/>
- Read and sign up for The Current (caucus email update)  
<https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/stay-connected/the-current/>
- Republican letters to Gov. Jay Inslee  
<https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2020/05/22/republican-letters-to-gov-jay-inslee/>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information and Resources | <https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/coronavirus/>
- Holding state government accountable  
<https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2018/05/07/holding-state-government-accountable/>
- Editorial boards criticize Democrats' policies, processes  
<https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2019/06/06/editorial-boards-criticize-democrats-policies-processes/>
- House floor debate highlights | <https://houserepublicans.wa.gov/2019/03/15/house-floor-debate-highlights/>