

Note: Everything in red text = hyperlink to more information

Storylines

This was the first all in-person legislative session since 2020. It led to better results on some policies.

- It was great to see constituents in offices, in the galleries, testifying in committees, and rallying at the Capitol.
- House: 58 Democrats, 40 Republicans | Senate: 29 Democrats, 20 Republicans.

Despite high inflation and gas prices, and economic uncertainty, Democrats did not consider real tax relief.

- House Republicans proposed sales tax relief, property tax relief and expanding the Working Family Tax Credit.
 - [Democrats' new tax increases since 2019.](#)

Public safety is a priority for Republicans. This issue is not a priority for Democrats – and it divides them.

- **Vehicular pursuits** | [SB 5352](#) is not enough (“no” vote) but better than nothing (“yes” vote).
 - Police officers are still not able to engage in vehicular pursuits for crimes such as auto theft, residential burglary, stalking, reckless and aggressive driving, and others.
 - Our communities want more. Law enforcement, local governments, businesses, editorial boards, and concerned citizens are asking for more. The debate continues.
- **Blake issue** | [SB 5536](#) was not the comprehensive solution our state needed for drug possession and treatment. Concerns (find more messaging on page five):
 - Creates gross misdemeanor, but with no teeth if case is deferred.
 - State preemption of drug paraphernalia.
 - Mixing of individuals in recovery and those actively using.
 - Establishes Health Engagement Hubs that are to be open to both children and adults and affiliated with safe consumption sites.
 - No requirement for public notice for siting of opioid treatment facilities.

It was disappointing Democrats did nothing for emergency powers reform or the long-term care payroll tax.

- House Republicans once again introduced emergency powers reform to restore balance and trust in state government | [HB 1535](#)
 - [Emergency powers reform: Restoring balance and trust to state government](#)
- House Republicans once again introduced legislation to repeal the long-term care payroll tax. | [HB 1011](#)
 - [Countdown to the Democrats' new payroll tax](#)

We saw bipartisan successes on:

- The Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, workforce issues, wildfires, and salmon recovery.
- Housing had momentum for a while, but we missed some opportunities:
 - Housing most impactful:
 - Middle housing | [HB 1110](#)
 - Accessory dwelling units | [HB 1337](#)
 - Streamlining development regulations | [HB 1293](#)
 - Housing missed opportunities:
 - Lot splitting | [HB 1245](#)
 - Homes for Heroes Program | [HB 1633](#)
 - Removal of illegal encampments | [HB 1373](#)

The transportation and capital budgets were again collaborative efforts and received bipartisan support.

- These budgets show what we can accomplish collectively when Republicans and Democrats work together.

The operating budget process was partisan in the House. We need a more balanced approach.

Operating budget | SB 5187 | 2023-25 budget cycle: July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025

Funds: K-12 education, higher education, corrections, human services, and other government operations.

Funded by: State taxes (sales tax, property tax and B&O tax), federal funds, tuition, and other sources.

- Despite ongoing economic concerns, state tax collections remain strong. Budget writers have \$2.7 billion more in revenue for 2023-25 compared to what was assumed in last year's budget.
- After paying for the costs to continue current programs, there is a four-year budget surplus of about \$6.6 billion.
- The 2023-25 budget increases spending to \$69.8 billion, a \$5.6 billion increase over current spending levels.
- The budget leaves a small NGF-O ending fund balance of \$105 million over the four-year outlook.
- The budget transfers \$1.3 billion from the "shadow reserve" to the general fund, leaving a combined \$3 billion in reserves at the end of 2025-27 (\$798 million in the shadow reserve plus \$2.1 billion in the rainy-day fund).
- **Additional fiscal information.**

Concerns = "no" votes:

- Under Democrat leadership, state spending has more than doubled over the past 10 years.
- Instead of focusing spending on key priorities with clearly defined outcomes, spending is spread across 1,800 separate line items with very little transparency or accountability.
- The budget leaves a very small ending fund balance and would not meet the four-year balanced budget requirement without aggressive assumptions about agency underspends.
- The budget leaves only \$3 billion in reserves by the end of the four-year outlook period. This is less than the State Treasurer's minimum target of 10% of annual NGF-O revenues, and less than the 50-state average.
- Despite uncomfortably high inflation, this budget provides no relief to taxpayers – in stark contrast to Democrat-controlled states across the nation.

Capital budget | SB 5200

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.

- Appropriates a total of \$8.98 billion; \$4.18 billion in newly authorized bonds.
- Makes significant investments in housing, behavioral health facilities and school construction.
- Leaves \$95.4 million for the 2024 supplemental capital budget.
- **Project list report.** | **Budget documents and lists.**

Transportation budget | HB 1125

Funds: Capital projects, operating programs and debt service.

Funded by: Fuel taxes, license fees, tolls, bonds, and federal funding.

- \$13.5 billion.
- \$860 million in funding that is expected to be unspent this biennium that is being moved into the next biennium, which is referred to as "reappropriation."
- Spends \$2.3 billion in federal funding. | Bond servicing will cost \$1.8 billion.
- Includes final revision for the 2021-23 biennium (second supplemental budget), a reduction of \$1.1 billion.
- **Project list and related documents.**

Learn more

- houserepublicans.wa.gov (external website)
- houserepublicans.wa.gov/central (internal website/intranet)
- [The Ledger | A legislative news aggregator](#)
- [2023 legislative session: Good and bad House bills](#)
- [Editorial boards criticize Democrats' policies, processes](#)
- [Republican letters to Gov. Jay Inslee](#)

House Republican agenda | Our priorities

Reducing your cost of living

- Repeal state long-term care insurance program and payroll tax. | [HB 1011](#)
- Property tax relief. | [HB 1483](#)
- Sales tax relief. | [HB 1704](#)

Making communities safer

- Increase funding for preventing, investigating and prosecuting auto theft statewide. | [HB 1682](#) (passed)
- Put more police officers in our communities. | [HB 1380](#)
- Close and clean up illegal homeless encampments. | [HB 1373](#)
- Confront drug addiction – knowing possession of a controlled substance a gross misdemeanor. | [HB 1415](#)

Fixing our housing crisis

- Expedite housing permits. | [HB 1401](#)
- Expand development boundaries. | [HB 1402](#)
- Increase housing options through lot splitting. | [HB 1245](#)
- Create a Homes for Heroes Program. | [HB 1633](#)

Empowering families

- Record school district board meetings. | [HB 1210](#) (passed)
- Expand the Working Families Tax Credit. | [HB 1000](#)
- Help students recover from learning loss. | [HB 1328](#)
- Provide school choice. | [HB 1615](#)

Missed opportunities

- Blake fix.
- Meaningful vehicular pursuit.
- Bipartisan collaboration on the operating budget.
- Real tax relief – including sales tax, property tax, or expansion of the Working Families Tax Credit.
- Any discussion on emergency powers reform or the long-term care payroll tax.

Bipartisan successes (bills prime sponsored by Democrats, supported by House Republicans)

- Extend military service credit for pensions to veterans in certain circumstances. | [HB 1007](#)
- Increase the threshold to qualify for the senior property tax exemption and making more frequent adjustments to the thresholds to account for inflation. | [HB 1355](#)
- Increase special education funding. | [HB 1436](#)
- Amend definition of serious traffic offense to include negligent driving and reckless endangerment where impairment is present. | [HB 1493](#)
- Provide incentives to help with recruiting state troopers. | [HB 1638](#)
- Reduce requirements for licensure or certification for certain behavioral health professionals. | [HB 1724](#)
- Eliminate College in the High School fees. | [SB 5048](#)
- Allow the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) to provide planning grants to qualifying projects to achieve site readiness. | [SB 5229](#)
- Direct the Department of Commerce to create a statewide small works roster for public procurement to help minority, women-owned and small businesses. | [SB 5268](#)

Bad Democratic bills that passed

- Establish significant new requirements to legally purchase or transfer a firearm, including a new permit requirement with fingerprinting, in addition to a background check. | [HB 1143](#)
- Eliminate criminals having to pay a penalty to fund services for victims of crimes and shift these costs to taxpayers. | [HB 1169](#)
- Add a climate change element to the Growth Management Act and require policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled. | [HB 1181](#)
- Prohibit the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, or offer for sale of any so-called assault weapon, subject to various exceptions for licensed firearm manufacturers and dealers and for individuals who inherit an assault weapon. | [HB 1240](#)
- Abolish advisory votes, which were approved by voters through I-960 in 2007. | [SB 5082](#)
- Repeal the law prohibiting L&I from adopting rules related to ergonomics or musculoskeletal disorders and provide limitations on the adoption of new ergonomic rules. | [SB 5217](#)
- Erode parental rights and allow shelters to not notify parents that their children are at a shelter if they are receiving gender-affirming care or reproductive services. | [SB 5599](#)

Bad Democratic bills that were stopped

- Would have allowed police officers to be sued personally while doing their jobs protecting our communities. [HB 1025](#)
- Would have allowed the release of incarcerated individuals prior to the expiration of a sentence. | [HB 1189](#)
- Would have reduced some sentences by eliminating certain enhancements. | [HB 1268](#)
- Would have required contractors on covered projects to provide certain environmental, health, labor, and HR data about construction materials used. | [HB 1282](#)
- Would have established annual rent increase maximum and authorize the attorney general to enforce the bill. [HB 1388](#)
- Would have established annual maximum rent increases that cannot exceed 7% but would have also created a “banking” system for landlords to save up additional rent increases that they can use at a later date. | [HB 1389](#)
- Would have prohibited law enforcement from stopping drivers committing certain violations, including nonmoving violations, certain suspended or revoked licenses, or certain misdemeanor warrants, and would have required written consent of the driver and passengers to search a vehicle. | [HB 1513](#)
- Would have increased the cost of multifamily housing and single-family homes through increases in both state and local real estate excise taxes. | [HB 1628](#)
- Would have allowed cities, counties and other taxing districts to triple their annual increases in property taxes. [HB 1670](#)

Good House Republican bills that passed the Legislature | [Full list](#)

- Establish regional apprenticeship programs (Running Start for the trades). | [HB 1013](#)
- Require light mitigation technology on new and existing utility scale wind farms to limit flashing red nighttime lights. | [HB 1173](#)
- Require all school district board meetings to be audio recorded, with recordings kept for at least one year, and made available to the public. | [HB 1210](#)
- Require the Department of Children, Youth and Families to establish a child malnutrition field guide. | [HB 1274](#)
- Make it easier to build new housing by eliminating burdensome red-tape requirements. | [HB 1293](#)
- Prohibit a person from selling, offering for sale, or otherwise making available over-the-counter sexual assault kits that may be used to collect sexual assault evidence. | [HB 1564](#)
- Increase funding for preventing, investigating and prosecuting auto theft. | [HB 1682](#)
- Require courts to develop and issue wallet sized laminated cards (Hope Cards) that contain certain information about a protection order. | [HB 1766](#)
- Allow an employee 18 years of age or older to work at a 21+ establishment as long as work performed is unrelated to the sale or service or alcohol. | [HB 1730](#)

Issues | House floor debate highlights: 2019-23**Blake | SB 5536**

- The governor has been missing the entire legislative session on Blake and the Democrat majority had two years to address it. They waited until day 105 and failed.
- This is not about politics; this is about life and death. People are dying on our streets.
- The status quo is failing. This bill also sets people up to fail.
- This bill will not help people recover. It will perpetuate problems.
- This bill will “roll” our communities. Local governments will have less control over their communities than now.
- With or without this bill, funding will be provided to local governments for grants and dedicated to build out treatment programs. But it is going to take a while.
- While House Republicans pushed for a gross misdemeanor, the diversion process in this bill will lead to a revolving door. We need to tighten up the diversion process or people will game the system.
- This bill is not data-driven, evidence-based or best practices.
- There is no accountability for actions. An acknowledgement of a problem must be part of the solution.

Education | K-12 education facts

- We must help students recover from the learning loss created by Gov. Inslee’s decision to shut down in-class instruction in public schools. The remote learning experiment failed many students and caused new mental health challenges.
- **HB 1328** would create a new, temporary program designed to improve student performance in math and English language arts. The proposal would provide funding for districts to increase the number of students meeting grade-level standards on state tests. If public schools are not successful, parents of struggling students could qualify for a stipend to access direct tutoring or other academic supports.
- House Republicans have also offered real solutions for special education funding, school choice, dual credit programs, and school safety.

Emergency powers reform | Restoring balance and trust to state government

- Washingtonians should not be ruled by orders and proclamations for months on end.
- One person should not have absolute power, including how billions of dollars in federal funds are spent, which businesses are essential and whose livelihoods will be devastated.
- We must restore balance and trust in state government. House Republicans have offered common-sense, reform legislation. | **HB 1535**
- Facts:
 - Our state emergency powers allow the governor to waive or suspend laws and prohibit certain activities.
 - Waivers or suspensions of laws are limited to 30 days and require approval from the Legislature to extend.
 - Prohibitions can last longer if a state of emergency is in effect and do not require legislative approval to remain in place.

Environment and energy | Real solutions for Washington’s environment

- Our state does not have to mandate electric vehicles, remove dams or eliminate natural gas. This is the Democrats’ agenda. We need pragmatic, affordable and sustainable energy policies.
 - **Cooler, cleaner and healthier water.**
 - **Salmon and hydroelectric power can co-exist.**
- Republicans have supported several environmental bills in the past because they have been balanced:
 - Promoting healthy forest initiatives, providing incentives for solar energy, cleaning up toxic sites, removing legacy nets, dealing with derelict vessels, clearing fish passages, and ensuring oil-train safety.
- House Republicans introduced the Outdoor Recreation and Climate Adaptation (ORCA) Plan in 2022.
 - It focused on forest health, Puget Sound restoration, drought resiliency and flood mitigation.
- Senate Republicans introduced the **Power Washington** Plan in 2023. It has seven major goals.

Gun rights

- It is important to protect all constitutional rights – not just some of them.
- With more crime and fewer police officers in our communities, now more than ever, people are turning to firearms to protect themselves and their families.
- Whether it be for protection, sport or hobby – generations of Washingtonians have owned and used guns responsibly. And they will continue to.
- Responsible gun ownership is a way of life for many – in urban, suburban and rural Washington.
 - Imagine living in a rural area where law enforcement response time is an hour or more.
 - Seconds and minutes can matter in urban and suburban settings.

Homelessness

- We must address the root causes of homelessness: Drug addiction, mental health and economic despair. Our state also needs housing that is affordable.
- We want to help those who are in the grips of addiction. People deserve second chances. But no one should be allowed to continually commit crimes to fund their drug habits.
- **Seattle is Dying** and the **follow up** highlighted enforcement and intervention as keys to addressing this crisis.
- There must be accountability in both local and state governments, and clear accounting of tax dollars used.

Housing | **Bills passed by Democrats that have contributed to our housing crisis**

- Washington lacks housing that is affordable due to unnecessary regulatory costs and fees, permit delays, restrictive zoning laws, and an antiquated Growth Management Act.
- A **study** says Washington state will need more than one million homes in the next 20 years.
- For years, Democrats talked about affordable housing and passed bills that made housing more expensive.
- Let's get out of the way of the private sector. Our problems will not be solved by the public sector alone.
- We want people to stay in their homes. But landlord/tenant laws must have balance and be fair to both parties.

Law enforcement

- We should not defund or disarm the police. The policing bills passed in 2021 made our communities less safe.
- We can't take away tools police officers rely on to deescalate situations and avoid the necessity to use deadly force.
- Our police officers are already held to a very high standard. We cannot make that standard an impossible one.
- We need to bridge the gap of the fragile relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Long-term care insurance program and payroll tax | **Countdown to the Democrats' new payroll tax**

- The new state-run, long-term care insurance program and its payroll tax should be repealed because they are unpopular, unfair and inadequate.
 - Unpopular: Washingtonians don't want this program. In 2021, a Senate Democrat **said** she hadn't heard from any constituents who are excited about the program. In the November 2019 general election, 62.92% of Washington voters said HB 1087, which was designed to levy 0.58% tax on wages to fund a program for long-term healthcare services, should be repealed in **Advisory Vote No. 20**. Many Washingtonians purchased private plans so they could escape the state-run program. Others wanted to.
 - Unfair: A new payroll tax is unfair and financially burdensome for someone living paycheck-to-paycheck and facing high inflation. Someone could also pay into the system for the duration of his or her career and never need to use the benefit. Or, someone could pay into the system for years, move to another state to retire and never get to use the benefit.
 - Inadequate: The limited \$36,500 benefit, not available until July 2026, is not adequate and may give someone a false sense of security about future long-term care needs.

State government accountability | Media coverage of Inslee Administration problems

- We have talented and dedicated state employees who deliver important services and programs to Washingtonians. However, high-profile failures in Gov. Inslee’s state agencies – including DOC, DSHS and ESD – are having tragic consequences and wasting tax dollars.
- We need to hold the governor and state agencies accountable for their actions and results. And we need Democrats in the Legislature to acknowledge these problems exist.
- A smarter, more effective state government will lead to better results and more public confidence in how tax dollars are being used.

Wildfire prevention and response

- We need to focus our efforts and limited resources on preventing catastrophic wildfires, not just fighting them.
- We have weak and diseased trees, too many stems-per-acre and not enough access to our back country.
- Prescribed burns, selective thinning and firebreak planning – these all have to be part of the overall discussion. The best thing we can do to prevent catastrophic wildfires is to properly manage our forests.
- One bad wildfire can negate years of any progress we’ve made in terms of reducing carbon in the air. Wildfire carbon, with high particulate matter, has real and measurable costs for those with health and breathing issues.