



# 2024 Legislative Report

## 25th Legislative District



Rep. Kelly Chambers • Sen. Chris Gildon • Rep. Cyndy Jacobsen

### *In Olympia, people's voices made the difference*

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As your lawmakers from the 25th Legislative District, we are focused on fixing the growing number of problems facing communities here in Pierce County and across the state.

Before this year's session began, we asked what the Legislature's priorities should be. You told us public safety (82%), affordability (70%), improving public education (67%), drug addiction (63%), public services for the homeless and mentally ill (54%) and increasing affordable housing (51%).

We heartily agree. Unfortunately, solutions have been difficult to reach these last few years under a legislative leadership that often puts political doctrines ahead of pragmatism. This year the people took charge, by presenting six initiatives to the Legislature and declaring that critical issues can no longer be ignored.

As members of the Legislature's minority party, we were delighted to see this happen. The people kept up their pressure and so did we. Ultimately the majority reluctantly allowed three of these measures to come to the floor for a vote. At last we were able to respect the people's wishes by restoring police pursuits, banning income taxes and giving parents a voice in their children's education. We only wish we'd been able to vote on all six initiatives. The other three advance to the ballot in November.

The people made a difference this year, and we can only hope this marks the start of a new era in the Washington Legislature. In this newsletter, we'll tell you about these initiatives and other signs of progress. We appreciate your support for our efforts to improve the lives of Washingtonians and ensure our state is the best place in the country to live and work. We want to hear from you, and we hope you will contact us with your comments, questions and concerns as we continue representing you throughout the year.

It is an honor to serve you.

Sen. Chris Gildon

Rep. Kelly Chambers

Rep. Cyndy Jacobsen

**TOWN HALL  
MEETING  
SET FOR APRIL 20!**

Meet your 25<sup>th</sup> District legislators for a recap of the 2024 session!

Pierce College – Arts and Allied Health Building Theater – 10 a.m. to noon  
Have coffee with us at 10 a.m. – meeting starts at 10:30 a.m.

See back page  
for more details.

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

### Initiatives set the pace for the 2024 legislative session

*Six measures forwarded by the people this year changed the way the Legislature looked at everything*

The 2024 legislative session concluded March 7 after 60 days in Olympia. This year we saw something remarkable. This was a year in which the people showed us they are in charge of their state government, and not the other way around.

#### Initiatives were game-changers

The people collected 2.6 million signatures to place six initiatives before the Legislature this year. These initiatives demonstrated the people’s frustration with the “progressive agenda” a Seattle-dominated majority has been pushing since 2018. The result unfortunately has been the opposite of progress – higher taxes, a rising crime rate and growing government power over our daily lives.

These initiatives changed the course of this year’s session. Our colleagues recognized the overwhelming popularity of these measures. So they allowed votes on three of them, reluctantly undoing part of their program in the process. We were delighted to join our fellow Republicans in voting for:

- **Initiative 2081**, enacting a “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” giving parents a voice in decisions affecting their children in the public schools,
- **Initiative 2111**, prohibiting state and local personal income taxes, and
- **Initiative 2113**, restoring the ability of police to chase fleeing suspects, and reversing the tragic decision to let criminals go free.

#### Three initiatives will appear on November ballot

Unfortunately, our colleagues would not allow us to vote on the three remaining initiatives. So three measures will appear on the general election ballot in November for voters to decide. They are:

- **Initiative 2109**, repealing the state’s new income tax on capital gains,
- **Initiative 2117**, repealing the state’s new cap-and-trade taxes, and
- **Initiative 2124**, allowing Washington workers to opt out of a new mandatory payroll tax for long-term care.

#### Initiatives were game-changers

This strong rebuke from the public affected the way other issues were considered. The people’s voice was heard on other issues as well.

One casualty was a proposal that would have allowed property taxes to increase three times faster than they already do (**Senate Bill 5770**). This would have been the largest tax increase in state history, \$10 billion after 10 years. Public uproar convinced our colleagues to back off.

Also defeated were proposals that attempted to address our state’s shortage of affordable housing with unworkable political dogmas like rent control (**House Bill 2114**) and higher real estate excise taxes (**House Bill 2276/Senate Bill 6191**). These would have provided a disincentive to new construction and created pressure for higher rents. Other extreme proposals also faltered. On the whole it was a bad

year for sweeping schemes to expand government power and control.



Scene on the Senate floor as Legislature adjourned March 7.

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

### Natural gas bill could have an enormous impact

**Homeowners would have to replace furnaces, stoves and water heaters – at a cost of billions**

Most agenda-driven bills seemed to run out of steam this year, but we couldn't stop them all. One especially troubling new law forces billions of dollars in new costs onto consumers. **House Bill 1589** gives the state's largest gas-and-electric utility an easy out from arbitrary state emissions goals, by setting the stage for a phaseout of natural gas.



Credit: CC BY-SA 4.0/CARLOS534

Under the bill, Puget Sound Energy would submit plans to state regulators in 2027 to stop providing natural gas to consumers. Gas prices would skyrocket during the phaseout period. Homeowners also would have to junk gas appliances and replace them with electric ones. Average conversion cost is estimated at \$40,000 per home, and costs would

be much higher for owners of older homes where wiring and other equipment must be replaced. Business and industry also would face punishing costs. Yet this plan would have no measurable impact on world climate, and its main effect would be to eliminate one of our cheapest and cleanest sources of energy.

We battled this costly bill on the House and Senate floors, but we did not have the votes to defeat it. If this law survives challenges, we can expect efforts to force this costly plan on the entire state. It will place more demand on our electric grid, increase the chance of blackouts and further increase the cost of housing. This costly effort to ban natural gas promises to be an issue in future legislative sessions, and the people of Washington will need to make themselves heard.

### Chambers makes push for WA Cares transparency

Washington's new long-term care program is riddled with problems. Though it is financed by a mandatory payroll tax, the benefits are so restrictive that many workers who pay into the program may never see a dime, even if they eventually need home care or a stay in a nursing home. Chambers this year sponsored bipartisan legislation that would have allowed workers to determine for themselves whether the program is worth the cost.

**House Bill 2271** would have allowed individuals enrolled in the WA Cares fund to easily access information about the benefits they can expect. Though this bill passed the House unanimously, it proved too hot for the Senate to handle, and majority lawmakers took no action. Defeat of this bill was a blow to transparency. Whatever people's opinion about the program, workers deserve to know whether they can expect to see a dime.



### Combatting fentanyl a top priority

**Gildon is among authors of Senate 'Recovery Washington' package**

News reports say fentanyl-laced pills are selling four-for-a-dollar on the streets of Portland as the synthetic opioid takes a deadly toll in the Pacific Northwest. Washington and Oregon are among the states hardest hit as fentanyl displaces heroin and meth as our nation's deadliest hard drug. According to the latest federal statistics, Oregon and Washington had the highest overdose death rates in the 12 months preceding September. Our state had the highest numerical increase in overdose deaths, from 2,483 to 3,511.

Gildon was among Republicans who introduced the **Recovery Washington** package in the Senate this year to put emphasis on treatment, recovery and prevention. Several key proposals in this package won approval in the final budget agreement. These include funding for regional drug task forces, which had been targeted for cuts, and a statewide public education program under the Department of Health to underscore the point that 'One Pill Kills.' Lawmakers also approved a Recovery Washington proposal for ongoing funding of tribal opioid programs, which serve both tribal and non-tribal members. Other proposals show promise and will return next year, as we work to bring this scourge under control.



Credit: DEA.

# 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

## No new taxes in this year’s budget

### But spending remains perilously high

There’s good news and bad news about this year’s budget. The \$71.9 billion supplemental operating budget makes only modest revisions to the two-year budget passed by the Legislature in April 2023. It has no new taxes and a much higher emergency reserve than the governor proposed in his budget.

Members of both parties worked cooperatively in the Senate. Gildon was part of the budget-writing team, as assistant ranking member on the Senate Ways and Means Committee. While this year’s plan was by no means a Republican proposal, we were at the table in the Senate, and the final budget reflected many of our priorities. These included increased funding for paraeducators, charter schools, public safety programs and efforts to combat our fentanyl crisis (see related story).

Unfortunately, House leaders shut out minority input. The final budget bill, **Senate Bill 5950**, eliminated important items like funding to reduce school absenteeism and to combat salmon predation on the Columbia. Spending remains perilously high, and over the long term this trend cannot be sustained. In this time of higher prices at the gas station and the grocery store, holding the line on taxes isn’t enough. We should be talking about tax relief instead.



## Jacobsen seeks childcare solutions

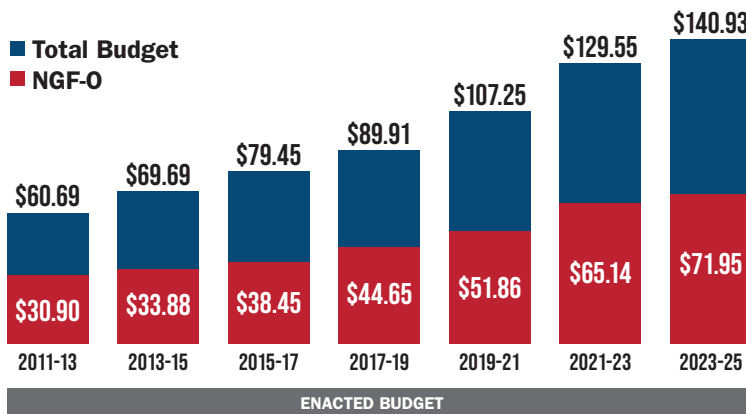
Washington continues to suffer a childcare crisis with not enough facilities to meet the demand – resulting in childcare “deserts” throughout the state. Rep. Jacobsen worked on legislation this session to increase the areas zoned for childcare. **House Bill 2468** would allow counties, cities, and towns to permit childcare facilities in or near zones where there is an elementary school. State government needs to get out of the way and let the private sector better address our childcare shortage.

Jacobsen’s **House Bill 1967** would have eliminated first-time offender waivers for defendants convicted of a fatal hit-and-run. In the last three years, seven hit-and-run drivers were granted waivers – receiving sentences of 90-days or less for a fatal crime. The bill passed the House but did not make it out of the Senate.

Jacobsen also sponsored **House Bill 2241**, which would prevent licensed health care providers from prescribing cross-sex hormones and puberty blockers, or performing gender-altering surgeries for minors in Washington. This is a sensitive subject and compassion is needed, but taking a deeper look at the long-term effects of providing hormones and surgeries to minors is vital. Jacobsen plans to re-introduce all three bills next session.

## Operating Budget Spending by Biennium

dollars in billions



**Transportation:** This year’s \$13.5 billion supplemental transportation budget maintains full funding for 25th District projects approved last year, including \$870 million for the long-awaited Gateway Project. It adds \$500,000 for the 23rd Avenue SW sidewalk project, which will improve safety for schoolchildren, motorists and transit riders.

**Capital projects:** New projects in the capital budget for the 25th District include a new roof at the WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center (\$1 million), stormwater upgrades for Puyallup (\$772,000), Step by Step Early Learning Center improvements (\$515,000), the Shore Friendly erosion prevention program (\$576,000) and water system improvements in the Western Ranchettes area (\$150,000).

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



### **Sen. Chris Gildon**

This year in Olympia I think we saw the start of something important. The people demanded they be heard, and they forced the Legislature to take notice. By passing three of the people's initiatives, we began the long process of bringing our state government back into balance. I hope it continues. While I am the deputy leader of the Senate Republican Caucus, I believe strongly that I am not here to represent a party, but rather the people of my district. This means seeking pragmatic compromises to promote public safety, keep Washington affordable, rebuild our public education, and offer practical approaches to homelessness, drug addiction and other social problems.

I am especially proud of the role I played this session as assistant lead for our caucus on the operating budget. We demonstrated that cooperation and diligent deliberation brings results reflecting all points of view. Our 'Recovery Washington' package in the Senate offered a treatment-and-prevention based response to our tragic opioid crisis. Next session I will continue pursuing legislation that better connects people suffering addiction with treatment, as well as efforts to increase accountability for all elected officials – especially elected prosecutors. By focusing on the work of governance, with your help and your voice, we can get things done.

### **Rep. Kelly Chambers**

Throughout my time as a state lawmaker, public safety has been one of my top priorities. Although I will not be running for reelection to the Legislature in November, I am leaving on a high note because we were able to pass **Initiative 2113**.

In recent years, we have seen skyrocketing crime rates in our state, in part due to policies the Legislature has passed that have emboldened criminals and undermined law enforcement.

In my floor speech in support of the initiative, I said the following:

*"I am in support of this today because I stand for the rule of law. I stand for this today because I want to let our law enforcement community know that I support them and the work they do to keep our communities safe and to serve and protect the public. I also stand today in support of this to support constituents of mine that have been negatively impacted by this Legislature that passed a bill to restrict law enforcement's ability to conduct vehicle pursuit.*

*I stand for 12-year-old Immaculee Goldade, who was killed in Midland. Sunday morning, 10 a.m. walking home with her best friend from a sleepover. Mr. Speaker, law enforcement needs to be able to pursue criminals that are out there stealing vehicles that should be stopped, so that criminal activity doesn't then go on to cause other irreparable harm to our communities."*

I leave the Legislature with a sense of satisfaction because law enforcement will once again be able to stop criminals and protect children like Immaculee.



### **Rep. Cyndy Jacobsen**

I believe government should keep its promises and live within its means. The state has been operating with a surplus of revenue in every legislative session since I took office in 2020. State government has enough money and must be accountable for its spending and the policies and programs it funds.

I believe in sensible regulatory policies that steward our environment in a cost-effective way. I also



believe strongly in funding schools, law enforcement, and helping people suffering from mental health and substance abuse disorders.

I understand and recognize the need to show compassion and kindness to those suffering from these issues, as well as those experiencing homelessness. However, we must find ways to do this without raising taxes on those who are already overburdened.

I serve as the assistant ranking member on the Finance and Local Government committees. I oppose new taxes and continue to focus on school safety and transparency, childcare zoning, supporting law enforcement and corrections officers, and issues of concern to families in my district.

# 25th District Legislative Report

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REPRESENTATIVE  
**Cyndy  
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## You're Invited! 25th District Town Hall Meeting

Join your lawmakers for an in-person discussion of the issues facing the 25th Legislative District.

**Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>**

**from 10 a.m. to noon**

at the Pierce College

Arts and Allied Health Building Theater

Have coffee with us at 10:00 a.m. -- meeting begins at 10:30 a.m.

1601 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Puyallup

*Note: Pierce College is not affiliated or an event sponsor.*

**SEN. Chris Gildon**  
Deputy Republican Leader

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