



SENATOR  
Chris Gildon



REPRESENTATIVE  
Kelly Chambers



REPRESENTATIVE  
Cyndy Jacobsen



# 25th District Legislative Report



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Washington’s 2023 legislative session has finally come to an end. It took 105 days, plus a one-day special session on May 16 to wrap up an important piece of legislation -- a comprehensive revision to our state’s laws against hard drugs.

We were able to make progress this year on a number of important areas. At a time when there seems to be more divisiveness than ever, we were able to work across the aisle on many issues and found more common ground between Democrats and Republicans. And because there is so much more work to be done, we are hopeful we can come together and identify additional common ground to solve problems facing our state.

In this report about the 2023 legislative session, we’ll explain how the votes we took in Olympia this year affect life at home in Pierce County’s 25th Legislative District. Big wins for our area include parks, daycare facilities and an \$870 million investment in the Puget Sound Gateway project, the long-needed freeway link between Puyallup and the Port of Tacoma.

Public safety was the top issue of the year, driven by rising crime rates and tragedies like the death of Immaculee Goldade from Midland (see inside). Most lawmakers now agree the majority party went too far two years ago when it responded to urban riots by placing major restrictions on police – in particular a ban on most vehicle police pursuits. This year, Republicans were able to build a coalition with moderate Democrats to pass a bill partially lifting the ban, but fierce resistance from some of our colleagues made full restoration impossible. The bill may not have gone far enough, but we see it as a sign of promise.

We saw the same sort of coalition-building on other major bills such as drugs, housing policy, and the transportation budget. Certainly, we saw some of the same problems as in recent sessions, including legislation driven by partisan urban political agendas on guns, workplace regulation, government accountability and transparency, and more. We saw no action this year on lingering issues like the governor’s too-expansive emergency authority and the state’s troubled long-term-care insurance program, due to launch July 1.

Yet in 2023 the Legislature started to shake off some of the lockstep partisanship of recent years, got down to work and passed some significant legislation. We hope the trend continues. If you have any thoughts about specific issues or the direction of state government, we hope you will contact us at our district office in Puyallup. Serving you is our most important duty.

Sincerely,

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## 2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

### PUBLIC SAFETY

#### Police can again pursue vehicles, but under limited circumstances

On Jan. 15, 2022, 12-year-old Immaculee Goldade of Midland was struck and killed by the driver of a stolen flatbed truck, and her best friend Kathleen Olson severely injured, in a case that brings home the tragic effect of restrictions on policing enacted by our majority colleagues in 2021. Just two weeks before the hit-and-run accident, officers were forced to let the same suspect flee the scene of a burglary, because a just-enacted ban on most police pursuits prevented them from giving chase. The case illustrates the need for allowing pursuits of stolen vehicles and some property crimes. Not allowing law enforcement to take circumstances into account and make decisions is not just dangerous, it's deadly!



Public safety proved the biggest issue of the 2023 session, as a rising crime rate forced the Legislature to reconsider measures it passed to rein in law enforcement two years ago. We fought long and hard in the House and Senate this year to restore our police pursuit law. Unfortunately, we encountered stiff resistance and got only partway. Ultimately the Legislature passed a law allowing pursuits when police have a reasonable suspicion a suspect is involved in a violent crime. However, where non-violent crimes like vehicle theft or burglary are concerned, law enforcement officers will still have to let most suspects flee. Until we address this issue in full, we can expect more tragedies like that of Immaculee Goldade.

#### Bipartisan drug possession bill passes during one-day special session

Lawmakers were under pressure this year to pass a new law against the possession of hard drugs like heroin and fentanyl, but it took a special session to produce a final agreement. Two years ago, in a case called *State v. Blake*, the state Supreme Court overturned our felony statutes on a technicality. Our majority colleagues insisted on transforming possession into a misdemeanor. This law was due to expire June 30, which would have left Washington with no law at all against hard drugs. Under this weak approach, drug usage skyrocketed. Overdose deaths doubled between 2020 and 2022, to 2,500. Both Republicans and Democrats in the Senate came up with a tougher approach, but House Democrats balked. They came up with a toothless proposal that satisfied no one and failed on the House floor on the final day of the regular session.

Lawmakers then returned for a one-day special session May 16 and passed a bill making possession and public drug use a gross misdemeanor, punishable on the first two offenses by up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. This new law allows prosecutors and judges the ability to impose jail time for addicts who fail to accept the treatment they need. We supported the final agreement, though we believe there is more to be done.

## Legislature launches projects across 25th District

#### Pipeline Trail, Meeker Mansion, New Beginnings Homes and other local projects win funding

A trail network extending to Mt. Rainier, childcare facilities, parks and playgrounds are among local projects funded by the 2023 Legislature. The projects are contained in the state's \$8 billion capital budget, which uses bonds and other sources of money to pay for public works and infrastructure. Capital budget projects are important because they create jobs and serve important needs of the community. Projects in the 25th District include:

- **Pipeline Trail – \$1.5 million** – Will continue extension of Pierce County's trail network from Tacoma to South Hill and connect to other local trails, part of county's effort to develop a network that will reach Mt. Rainier. Budget also provides \$1 million to develop Orangegate and Half Dollar parks along trail route.
- **New Beginnings Homes – \$440,000** – Puyallup program serving new mothers gets state help with 11-cottage expansion.
- **Step by Step Early Learning Center – \$2.6 million** – State assistance for new Puyallup childcare facility.
- **Remembrance Gallery – \$257,000** – Will help build a WWII Japanese internment-camp exhibit at Washington State Fairgrounds.
- **Heritage Center at Meeker Mansion – \$496,000.**
- **Downtown Puyallup stormwater upgrades – \$696,000.**
- **Thun Field emergency response meeting space – \$1 million.**
- **Clarks Creek Park multipurpose field turf – \$350,000.**
- **Puyallup Elks roof replacement – \$370,000.**
- **Puyallup Veterans of Foreign Wars repairs – \$206,000.**



## 2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

### Transportation budget includes big win for the 25th District

The Legislature passed the two-year transportation budget on the second to last day of session. The best news is, despite the governor's proposal to delay transportation projects in the 25th District, the budget includes \$925 million in funding for transportation projects in the 25th District, including more than \$873 million to continue the Puget Sound Gateway project instead of delaying it further. That is in addition to the more than \$680 million already allocated for this project. This is a huge step forward for our district and the many longshoremen and other port workers who live here, as it will help connect Puyallup to Tacoma and the port. Overall, this \$13.5 billion bipartisan plan funds infrastructure projects across the state, including maintenance and preservation of current transportation systems, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the State Patrol, and other state transportation agencies.



### State spending rises in new budget

Despite ongoing economic concerns, state tax collections remain strong, and budget writers have \$2.7 billion more in revenue for 2023-25 compared to what was assumed in last year's budget. However, the 2023-25 operating budget increases spending to \$69.8 billion, representing a \$5.6 billion increase over current spending levels. While the budget funds many important programs, it does not reflect bipartisan input to the extent of the other two budgets, especially for House Republicans, who were completely left out of the budget writing process. The spending plan does not offer any significant tax relief to hard-working Washingtonians or keep enough in reserves, even though an economic slowdown has been forecast. Instead, it allocates money for close to 1,800 new or expanded programs and other general funding for current programs. On the plus side, it does not include new taxes or increases.

### Second Amendment rights a major issue

#### Three measures impair a constitutional right, face court challenges

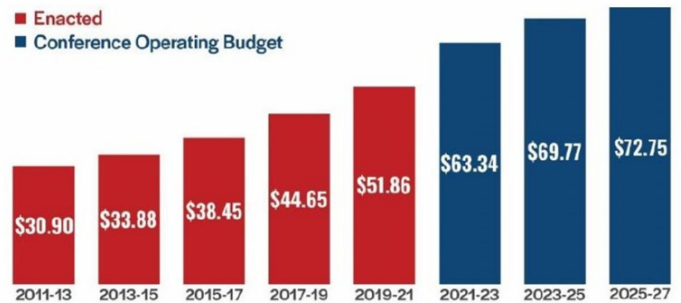
All of us deplore violence, but Republicans and Democrats strongly disagree on solutions. This year's Legislature enacted three of the strongest anti-gun measures ever to be enacted on the state level, and we could see court challenges all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. We'll leave constitutionality for judges to decide. For the Legislature, the question is whether more rules and regulations for law-abiding gun owners will make any difference at all.

Our colleagues in the majority party seem to think so. They enacted a ban on high-capacity rifles and a new requirement that firearms purchasers complete state-approved safety classes, and they allowed the attorney general to sue gun manufacturers and dealers when firearms are used in crime. Unfortunately, this emotional response to recent tragedies will do nothing to quell those determined to do violence.

Most likely we will be back again next year debating new gun restrictions. If we are to address violence in our society, we need to consider fundamental issues – mental and behavioral problems, and our collective responsibility to prevent violence before it occurs. This is a much more difficult task that will require us to rethink our assumptions – and it is time we started.

### State Spending by Biennium

dollars in billions



### Long-term care payroll tax starts July 1

Starting July 1, most Washington workers will begin paying a new payroll tax for a first-of-its-kind insurance program for long-term care. Unfortunately, with a meager maximum lifetime payout of just \$36,500, benefits will cover only a few months' stay in a nursing home. Moving to another state? You can't take it with you.

Approved by our colleagues four years ago, this troubled program was supposed to launch last year, but was delayed until now so lawmakers could work out the bugs. Some of the biggest problems went unaddressed. We think the Legislature should have started over and partnered with the private sector. A half-million Washington residents said "no thank you" in 2021 by obtaining more robust private insurance and opting out. Today exemptions are no longer an option. The initial tax rate for this program will be 58 cents for each \$100 of income, but pressure to improve benefits could cause taxes to increase in the future.



## 2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW



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

### SEN. Chris Gildon

Every session, the Legislature’s budget-writers spend hundreds of hours in public hearings. But what goes on in budget negotiations is one of the biggest mysteries at the Capitol. This year, as assistant ranking Republican on the Senate Ways and Means Committee, it was my privilege to sit at the table during deliberations on the operating budget, going through budget requests line by line. It makes me all the more appreciative of the hard work that goes into writing the single most important bill we pass each year.

This was the first time in more than a decade that Senate minority party members have been part of the full budget process – Republicans continued to be shut out in the House. I think it demonstrated the Legislature works best when all voices are heard. While the budget proposal we offered in the Senate reflected the majority’s goals, it was the most responsible plan we have seen in the last six sessions, avoiding tax increases and big run-ups in spending, and leaving a healthy reserve in case of downturns. The final \$69.8 billion budget deal reflected these principles.

This was a busy session for me. Not only was I on the budget team, I also served as deputy leader of the Senate Republican Caucus. As a member of the Senate Housing Committee, I was part of this session’s effort to promote affordable housing – one of the most significant accomplishments of the 2023 session.

I am especially proud of a bill I passed this year (**SB 5502**) requiring substance abuse evaluation and treatment for prisoners due for future release. The budget provides \$2.4 million for this purpose, and more – I also was able to get \$282,000 for a much-needed study of prisoner-rehabilitation programs offered through the Department of Corrections. Public safety needs to be a top priority for the Washington Legislature and making sure felons do not return to a life of crime is a good place to start.



### Housing a top issue in 2023

#### Lawmakers of both parties work together to relieve Washington’s housing shortage

Homes in Washington already are in short supply, and the state needs to build a million more over the next 20 years to meet demand. Lawmakers this year made Washington’s housing shortage a top priority, passing more than 20 bills removing obstacles to new home and apartment construction. More than any other issue in 2023, housing was a bipartisan success story.

Gildon was in the forefront of this effort, as a member of the Senate Housing Committee. Taking a cue from Florida law, Gildon proposed that permit fees be reduced when local governments unreasonably delay approvals. The idea, incorporated in **SB 5290**, offers an incentive for timely decisions, and will help reduce the cost of new projects, which ultimately makes homes more affordable for owners and renters.

Legislation approved this year requires cities to consider higher-density housing in residential neighborhoods, makes it easier for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units on their property, and eliminates burdensome environmental reviews for projects that comply with land-use guidelines. Other proposals, like bills to increase density near transit lines and lot splitting, will remain on the table next year. The effort is a historic course correction to three decades of state land-use and permitting policies that have restricted building sites and driven up costs. Washington has a long way to go. Current estimates are that state regulation adds about \$128,000 to the cost of a new home.



# 25TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REPORT

## REP. Kelly Chambers

With a rapidly growing aging population and many registered nurses in the field also reaching retirement, our state was facing serious nursing shortages even before COVID. When the pandemic hit, the demand for nursing services in our nursing homes, hospitals, rehabilitative care centers, and other health care facilities far outpaced the number of workers to meet those needs. That's why I introduced **HB 1568**.

The bill sought to incentivize current long-term care professionals to stay on the job and encourage others who retired or left long-term care to return to the profession. Although the measure passed the House, it stalled in the Senate. Fortunately, two other bills that passed the Legislature and were signed into law (**HB 1694** and **SB 5278**) adopted language of my bill, which will increase nurse staffing, alleviate shortages, and meet patients' needs.

One of the bright spots from the pandemic was a temporary law that allowed restaurants and breweries to serve "cocktails-to-go." That law was expiring June 30, so I co-sponsored **HB 1375** to make it permanent. A companion measure, **SB 5448**, was the legislation that passed. This was important to the hospitality industry and will help those neighborhood restaurants we love so much.

I am also pleased we passed **SB 5353** that opens the state's Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) for all counties to participate. VSP offers an alternative approach for protecting critical areas on lands where agricultural uses exist. I introduced a similar measure through **HB 1421**, but it was the Senate version that passed and became law. This will help farmers, land stewards, salmon habitat and restoration. It will also be good for our Pierce County farmers who have been wanting this additional flexibility.

I am concerned about efforts to reduce accountability and transparency in state government. Specifically, one of the worst bills passed this year eliminated the non-binding advisory votes on the ballot. I have always found these really engaged the voters. Without them, we will have less transparency and accountability of our elected legislators.



*Specialty license plates celebrating the Washington wine industry are now available through the Department of Licensing, the result of legislation sponsored by Chambers in 2022 (**HB 1530**).*



*Happy to work in person for the 2023 legislative session. Stopping new taxes and providing funds for a Thun Field Emergency Response meeting space were two highlights of the session.*

## REP. Cyndy Jacobsen

One of my most important accomplishments this session was securing funds for the Thun Field emergency response meeting space. In the summer of 2020, Washington suffered a terrible wildfire season, with major damage across the state, including the Sumner Grade fire. Part of the effort to battle these fires included transporting firefighters to and from Thun Field, which is the closest airport to Mount Rainier.

Emergency Management used Thun Field for helicopters so firefighters could be brought in. However, whenever firefighters and other emergency responders needed respite, they had to sleep outside on cots because there were no indoor facilities at this location. Additionally, portable toilets had to be brought in because there are no working bathrooms. Being able to secure \$1 million for this important facility will provide a space for future emergency management operations. I am very proud to have advocated for this and anxious to watch the renovation come to fruition.

As part of the House Finance Committee, I worked to stop the real estate excise tax (REET) increase. I am very honored to be a part of this committee because no one hates new taxes more than me, especially when we have budget surpluses. Additionally, I worked to stop **HB 1628**, which would have increased the cost of multi-family housing and single-family homes through increases in both state and local real estate excise taxes. Thankfully this bill died. House Republicans also worked to kill **HB 1670** in the Finance Committee. One of the top complaints that constituents have is ever-rising property taxes. This bill would have allowed the growth in property taxes to triple, from 1 percent annually to 3 percent.

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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.

**Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup>**  
from **6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

at the  
Fred Oldfield Western Heritage and Art  
Center at the Washington State Fairgrounds

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