

LEGISLATURE ADJOURNS WITH BIG JOBS UNDONE

SUCCESSES INCLUDE CATALYTIC CONVERTER BILL – BUT URGENT PROBLEMS IGNORED

The Washington Legislature adjourned its 2022 session March 10, after approving the biggest ramp-up in spending in the history of the state. Under control of a Seattle-dominated majority, the Legislature failed to address major problems in public safety, tax policy, energy prices and emergency management.

Good news included passage of a bill cracking down on catalytic converter theft (see inside) and a delay in a new payroll tax for a troubled long-term care insurance program.

For the second straight year, the public was shut out by COVID restrictions. The year's big story? This was the fifth session since our colleagues gained the majority, and big problems are surfacing with their agenda. Yet for the most part, they're not ready to admit mistakes. **Here's a look at the good and bad of this year's session.**

THE GOOD

Long-term care tax postponed – A first-ever state-run long-term care insurance program was supposed to launch Jan. 1. Problems included a mandatory payroll tax, skimpy benefits, payout restrictions and insolvency. Disaster was so obvious that both parties agreed to postpone it to next year. Our colleagues think they can fix it. We think it makes more sense to scrap it and start over.

Utility assistance – Our operating budget provides \$100 million in aid to low-income utility customers who deferred electric bills due to COVID. Contact your local utilities for details.

Blocked bad legislation – Bad bills killed this year would have restricted people's initiatives, ended life without parole, driven up homebuilding costs, protected Big Tech companies with "data privacy" legislation, expanded rural buffer zones and limited political free speech.

see page 2



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Our 2022 legislative session is over, and it was definitely a mixed bag. We scored a few successes this year, including a bill to crack down on catalytic converter theft. But these were outweighed by the Legislature's failure to correct some of the big policy mistakes it has made in recent years.

Public safety remains a mess. Crime rates are up everywhere in Washington. We linger in a COVID state of emergency after most states have sounded the all-clear. A wild spending spree this year sets the state up for big trouble the next time our economy has a hiccup. Yet for all the billions in new spending, there's not a dime for individual tax relief. A new state income tax comes due and payable next year, even though the state doesn't need the money, and new energy policies will soon force dramatic increases in gas and electricity prices. All this, courtesy of the Washington Legislature these past five years.

Since 2018, the Legislature has been under the control of a Seattle-centric majority stuck on tax increases, bigger spending and greater government authority. At this point in the cycle, we are beginning to see the problems these ambitious policies are creating. Our friends owned up to one big mistake this year as we voted to delay a new payroll tax for a badly-designed long-term care insurance program. On everything else, the thinking seems to be that if we ignore our problems, maybe they'll go away.

We have many opportunities to build a better and brighter future in the south-west corner of the state. We just need to get our priorities straight. Many bright solutions were presented this year, and we'll keep fighting for them in future sessions. We'll tell you about some of them in this session report. But let us remind you, we continue to work for you even after adjournment. If you have a comment about this year's session, or a problem dealing with a state agency, please contact our offices. We stand ready to serve you.

Sen. Jeff Wilson
jeff.wilson@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Jim Walsh
jim.walsh@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Joel McEntire
joel.mcentire@leg.wa.gov

from page 1

THE BAD

No meaningful action on public safety

– Minor adjustments this year failed to address the state’s public safety nightmare, created by new policies that hamstringing police and let felons out sooner.

See related story.

No emergency powers reform – Legislative leadership refused to consider measures to restore constitutional separation of powers and the people’s voice. **See related story.**

No fiscal restraint – Tax projections this year added \$10 billion to state coffers and triggered an unprecedented spending spree. Unsustainable spending got the Legislature in deep trouble in the last recession, but Olympia never learns.

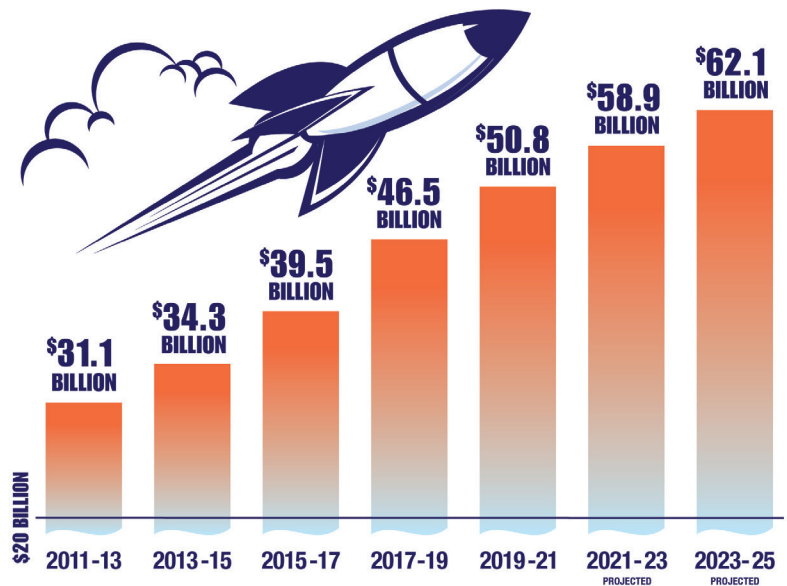
No tax relief – When Olympia has an enormous surplus, you might wonder – are taxes too high? Republican proposals this year would have reduced or suspended state property, sales and gas taxes. Our colleagues wouldn’t give them a hearing.

No action on income tax – With Olympia awash in money, why is the state still planning to collect an income tax next year? The biggest issue of the 2021 session, the income tax is an article of faith to our urban colleagues. The people have voted against it 11 times, yet current legislative leadership dithered and failed to repeal this bad policy.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Not much has changed since last year, except that we’ve spent ourselves deeper into a hole. We kicked our biggest problems to future years, ensuring they will get that much worse. To build a better future for our state, we will need to change this trend.

SKYROCKETING TAX COLLECTIONS



State tax-collection projections were up a whopping \$10 billion this year, and the big question was whether lawmakers could possibly spend that much. The majority leadership answered, “Hold my beer.”

This year’s budget is a stunning 22 percent increase over 2019-21. It contains 1,300 items of new spending, including obligations the state will be expected to maintain in future years. Washington had a historic opportunity this year to pay down long-term obligations, reduce the tax burden on the people of the state, and address deficiencies in our public schools after two years of remote learning. Instead, under current leadership, Olympia largely frittered the money away – and set the state up for big trouble in the next recession.

SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS ARE TARGETED

New laws passed this year continue to erode Second Amendment rights, with new restrictions on gun ownership and use. [SB 5078](#) bans the sale and manufacture of ammunition magazines holding more than 10 rounds, restricting the law-abiding but not the criminally inclined. [HB 1705](#) bans “untraceable firearms” without evidence of a problem and jeopardizes home gunsmithing. [HB 1630](#) further restricts open carry. [HB 1901](#) expands “red flag” laws revoking constitutional rights without due process. We led opposition to these bad bills.

I-5 DEATHS PROMPT WILSON TOW-TRUCK SAFETY MEASURE

Washington law says “slow down, move over” when emergency vehicles are at work on the shoulder, but four deaths in Southwest Washington last year show there’s a long way to go. Two stranded motorists and two tow-truck operators were killed when vehicles careened onto the shoulder. Wilson introduced [SB 5907](#), to reinforce the law with public education and signage, and allow tow trucks to use rear-facing red-and-blue flashers for improved visibility. Wilson’s Arthur Anderson and Raymond Mitchell Tow Operators Safety Act is named for the two operators killed last year in Southwest Washington, and was supported by tow-truck drivers statewide. The bill stalled in the House even as new deaths were reported; Wilson plans to renew the effort in 2023.

WILSON LEADS EFFORT TO CRACK DOWN ON CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT

MEASURE OFFERS HOPE AMID PUBLIC SAFETY MELTDOWN

Public safety has been under siege in Olympia, and that made passage of a bill this year to crack down on catalytic converter theft doubly significant. Sen. Jeff Wilson led efforts in the Senate this year to stem the nation's fastest rising crime.

The resulting bill, [HB 1815](#), makes it difficult to resell stolen catalytic converters through legitimate business channels. It imposes restrictions on scrap purchases by scrapyards and wreckers, requiring photo ID and proof of ownership, and prohibits cash payments on the spot.

The bill is a response to a wave of catalytic converter thefts nationwide and in Washington state, driven by rising precious-metal prices and high prices paid by recyclers. Thieves crawl under vehicles, saw the converters off tailpipes, and often do thousands of dollars in damage. The bill was a rare example of bipartisan cooperation, involving negotiation with police, prosecutors and industry – the problem was too big to ignore.

One omission might seem strange. The bill doesn't create a new felony for thieves, as Oregon and other states have done. Our colleagues didn't want to create any new crimes this year, and send more people to jail. The problem should be apparent.



Sen. Jeff Wilson, R-Longview.

NEW POLICIES WEAKEN PUBLIC SAFETY

An effort to “reduce incarceration” and get tough on cops is behind the public safety meltdown of the last five years. Our colleagues since 2018 have been waging an ideological war on all fronts, from courts to law enforcement in the field. Tough voter-approved anti-crime laws have been weakened, drug felonies have been wiped from the books, and mass releases of prisoners are now official state policy. These policies put ex-cons on the streets sooner – where a third can be expected to reoffend within three years.

This war on public safety reached the absurd last year when legislative Democrats passed a series of anti-police bills. These make it easier to prosecute and sue individual officers, and allow Olympia politicians to second-guess local investigations into police conduct. Restrictions on weapons and tactics now prevent most police pursuits – last year a Longview SWAT team was reduced to throwing rocks.

Although our colleagues restored some police weapons this year, they dug in their heels on the worst of these measures. Meanwhile, all categories of violent crime have seen double-digit rate increases since 2016, and assaults on police officers are up 67 percent. This deliberate effort to weaken public safety demoralizes our law enforcement community and puts the public at risk.



Midway through session, as negotiations on the catalytic converter bill got heated, someone parked a car across the street from the home of Sen. Jeff Wilson. Within days, the car had been stripped, the wheels removed, and the catalytic converter lopped off the tailpipe. Says Wilson, “It was as if somebody was trying to send me a message – don’t give up on the bill.”



Most seats in the House and Senate were empty as lawmakers convened their 60-day session on Jan. 10. Attendance was restricted as COVID precautions forced most lawmakers to participate by teleconference, and masking and testing requirements were enforced. Most importantly, the public was shut out for the second year in a row, and it was reflected in the results.

LEGISLATURE'S INACTION ON EMERGENCY POWERS REFORM LEAVES GOVERNOR IN CHARGE OF COVID FOR THIRD YEAR

Most other states have ended their COVID emergencies, but Washington is in its third year with no end in sight. Mask mandates ended March 12, but restrictions could be reimposed at any time. The problem? Washington is one of four states allowing their governors to decide when emergencies begin and end. Ours is in no hurry to give up his special authority to suspend laws and issue orders.

From arbitrary edicts with distant relationship to science to the mass firing of thousands of unvaccinated state employees, the governor's heavy-handed management of this crisis has created great upheaval. The worst part is that the people have had no voice, because our colleagues have refused to exercise the Legislature's authority to oversee COVID decision-making.

Reform of our emergency statutes is a top priority for Republicans and 19th District lawmakers. Rep. Walsh sponsored [HB 1029](#), forcing lawmakers to do their duty – by requiring a vote when an emergency exceeds 14 days. Sen. Wilson, ranking member on the Senate State Government and Elections Committee, led efforts to bring similar reforms to the Senate floor. Unfortunately, Democratic party leaders were unwilling to rein in the governor, and would not consider meaningful proposals.

REAL PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS OFFERED BUT NOT ADOPTED

Legislative Republicans this year mounted a strong effort to restore public safety as a top priority, advancing reform proposals with a comprehensive Safe Washington package. The 19th District was in the forefront of these efforts, with Rep. Walsh playing a major role as ranking member on the House Civil Rights and Judiciary Committee.

Walsh sponsored [HB 1588](#), which would have allowed police vehicular pursuits when there is reasonable suspicion a subject has committed a crime.

Another Walsh bill, [HB 1589](#), would have restored police use of physical force when appropriate and necessary. Unfortunately, our colleagues refused to hold hearings on these proposals and many others. A bill that would have restored police pursuits was killed by the majority on the final day of the session. Other good proposals that stalled in 2022 include:

- Tougher laws against human trafficking, domestic violence, driving under the influence and sexual assault.
- New laws to combat property crimes, retail theft and gang/drug-related crimes.
- Reform at the Department of Corrections, ending mass releases of prisoners, and halting plans for prison closures.
- Better funding for recruitment, retention and support of law enforcement officers.



NASELLE YOUTH CAMP TARGETED FOR CLOSURE

The Naselle Youth Camp in Pacific County has a great record in rehabilitating at-risk youth, providing structure and discipline to young men on a destructive path, helping them finish high school, teaching them life skills and giving them belief in themselves. Unfortunately, this program doesn't suit the ideology of the legislative majority, which holds that youths should remain in the same neighborhoods where they got in trouble in the first place. This year's budget will close the camp no later than June 30, 2023.

We've been battling closure for several years and have rescued the camp repeatedly from budget-writers' knives. When the budget came to the House floor, Rep. Walsh passed an amendment to keep the doors open. But the language was stripped during last-minute "conference committee" negotiations on the budget, closure was reinstated, further amendments were blocked, and Gov. Inslee ignored our urgent requests for a veto.

This is not simply a loss for Pacific County but for the entire state. The closure demonstrates the wrongheaded approach we have seen in recent years, and we will continue to fight to keep the camp open. Washington doesn't need to get rid of the camp – it needs more like it.

ASSISTING SMALL SCHOOLS WITH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

In our region and across Washington state, many small school districts are unable to access state funding for school construction. Reasons range from lack of bonding capacity to difficulties in passing local bond issues.

Rep. McEntire introduced [HB 1775](#) to provide funding for small school districts, through a grant process based on need. The proposal aids districts in dire need of capital funding, ensuring students across the state have an equitable learning environment regardless of where they live. The bill received bipartisan support and positive feedback, but it was a big lift for a short session. School financing will remain an issue in future legislative sessions.

HARMFUL 'BUFFER ZONE' LEGISLATION HALTED IN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

One of the session's biggest successes was stopping a land-use proposal from the governor that would have devastated farmers and rural property owners across the state. [HB 1838](#) would have established mandatory "buffer zones" around streams for salmon habitat. Rep. McEntire was among members of the House Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee who prevented the bill from advancing.

Opposition and public outcry were fierce. Buffers could have reached 250 feet, forcing farmers to take large tracts of land out of production. Tree-planting requirements would have forced landowners to pay 30 percent of the cost, or face fines of up to \$10,000 a day. Had the governor been successful in his effort, private property rights would have been further eroded, our agricultural economy devastated, our food supply placed at risk.



Rep. Jim Walsh, R-Aberdeen.



Rep. Joel McEntire, R-Cathlamet, on district tour.

19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT • 2022 SESSION UPDATE

SEN. JEFF WILSON
REP. JIM WALSH
REP. JOEL MCENTIRE

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 1885

LOCAL PROJECTS FUNDED IN CAPITAL BUDGET

The 19th District did well in this year's supplemental capital budget, which pays for public works projects statewide. More than \$4.1 million was awarded for projects in Southwest Washington. Rep. McEntire was instrumental in negotiations as assistant ranking Republican on the House Capital Budget Committee. Here's a look at this year's project list, serving communities and people right here at home.

- Veteran Housing and Resource Center (Raymond), \$2.3 million;
- Wahkiakum School District facility accessibility needs, \$515,000;
- Westport Marina gear yard (Westport), \$412,000;
- Pacific County Fair Three M Project (Raymond), \$412,000;
- Vandercook Park restroom (Longview), \$309,000;
- Longview Senior Center roof and energy upgrades (Longview), \$273,000;
- Community/Technical College system, minor works, \$259,000;
- CHOB electrical upgrade to emergency shelter (Longview), \$258,000;
- 5970 #1 Bridge Replacement, \$250,000;
- Veteran Housing at Stratford Apartments (Longview), \$206,000;
- 5973 Bridge Replacement, \$200,000;
- Beaver Creek Hatchery, renovation, \$135,000; and
- Rister Stadium elevator lift (Kelso), \$33,000.

Contact us!

If you have an issue with state government, please do not hesitate to contact our offices. We want to know what you're thinking, and we stand ready to assist if you have a problem with a state agency.

Sen. Jeff Wilson

(360) 786-7636

Jeff.Wilson@leg.wa.gov

109-B Irv Newhouse Building

P.O. Box 40419

Olympia, WA 98504

Rep. Jim Walsh

(360) 485-0547

Jim.Walsh@leg.wa.gov

428 John L. O'Brien Building

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Rep. Joel McEntire

(360) 841-7108

Joel.McEntire@leg.wa.gov

409 John L. O'Brien Building

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600