

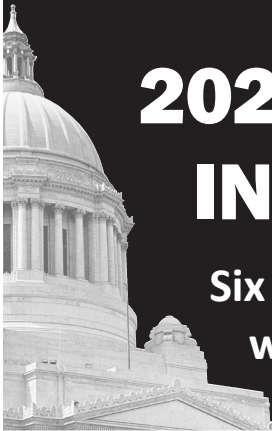


SEN. JEFF WILSON

19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT • 2024 SESSION REPORT

2024 WAS YEAR OF THE INITIATIVE IN OLYMPIA

Six initiatives from the people changed the way the Legislature looked at everything



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This year in Olympia, we saw a remarkable thing. The people reminded us that they are in charge of their government, and not the other way around. In this report about the 2024 legislative session, let me tell you what happened in Olympia this year.

I call this the “**Year of the Initiative**,” because the people drove the session this year from start to finish. The people presented the Legislature with six initiatives that challenged the direction the Legislature has taken these last several years. As your senator from the 19th Legislative District, I was proud to vote yes on three of them. You will see the other three on the ballot in November.

These initiatives changed the way we looked at everything. Several harmful proposals were defeated. But watch out for this year’s natural gas bill – it could be a backbreaker.

This and more – inside! I hope you are able to make it to one of my town hall meetings in April. I want to hear from you. If you have thoughts or concerns about the direction of state government, or a problem with a state agency, please give my office a call at (360) 786-7636, drop me a line at Jeff.Wilson@leg.wa.gov, or send me a letter at the address on this page. My most important duty is to serve you.

Sen. Jeff Wilson
19th Legislative District



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SEN. JEFF WILSON,
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“The first power reserved by the people is the initiative.”

Washington State Constitution, Article II, Section 1

2024 WAS THE ‘YEAR OF THE INITIATIVE’

Since 2018, an urban majority in the Legislature has been pushing what it calls a ‘progressive’ agenda. This year the people pushed back. They collected 2.6 million signatures to place six initiatives before the Legislature. These initiatives demonstrated the people’s frustration with higher taxes, a rising crime rate, and growing government power over our daily lives.

These initiatives changed the course of the session. The majority recognized all six of these measures would pass if they were allowed to advance to the ballot, and it reluctantly permitted votes on three of them. I was delighted to join my fellow Republicans in voting to pass –

- **Initiative 2081**, enacting a “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” giving parents a voice in decisions affecting their children in the public schools,
- **Initiative 2111**, prohibiting the Legislature from passing new 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

I wish we could have voted on all of these initiatives. Unfortunately, the majority would not allow the House and Senate to vote on three of them. Instead, these initiatives will advance to the November general election ballot – voters will 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

These initiatives changed the way other issues were considered. New schemes faltered, and the people’s opinions were given greater weight.

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 gave our colleagues cold feet.

Also defeated were proposals for unworkable political dogmas like rent control (**House Bill 2114**) and increases to real estate taxes (**House Bill 2276/Senate Bill 6191**), which not only provide a disincentive to new construction, but also increase pressure for higher rents.

NATURAL GAS BILL COULD HAVE ENORMOUS IMPACT

Consumers would pay billions to replace furnaces, stoves and water heaters



Most agenda-driven bills appeared 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.

Direct effect on the 19th District is limited – PSE supplies gas only in Lewis County. But if this bad idea survives challenges, we can expect it to spread to other parts of the state. In the short term, gas costs will skyrocket. Next consumers will have to replace stoves, water heaters and furnaces. Costs will be huge – about \$40,000 for the average homeowner. Costs will be higher in older homes where wiring and other equipment must be replaced. State regulators would review and approve this plan in 2027.

Business also would face punishing costs, unique for every industry. Yet this plan would have no measurable impact on world climate. Its main impact will be to eliminate one of our cleanest, cheapest and most reliable sources of energy. It will heap more demand on our electric grid and increase the chance of blackouts. This costly effort to ban natural gas is certain to be an issue in future years, and the people of Washington will have to make their opinions known to their Legislature.



ELECTRIC VEHICLE BILL IS SIGNED INTO LAW

What do you do when your electric vehicle goes into flame mode? In this early stage of EV technology, battery fires are all too common. Special hazards when batteries burst into flame are high voltage, intense heat, toxic fumes and a tendency to reignite. EV fires are so dicey firefighters often let them burn.

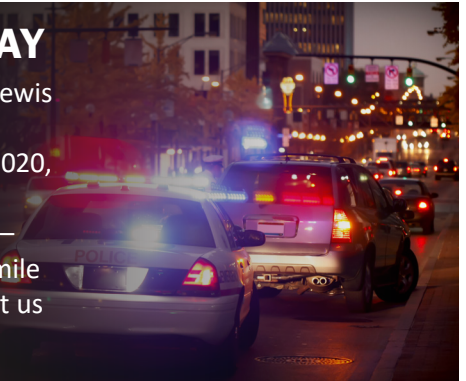
To address this problem, I introduced [Senate Bill 5812](#), directing the Washington State Patrol to launch an EV firefighting study. This study would identify best practices for firefighters, police and tow operators, and make recommendations for safe storage of vehicles. The measure passed the House and Senate unanimously. Until we get a handle on this problem, the risk of fire will be a major obstacle to EV acceptance.



Credit: Washington State Patrol.

JUSTIN R. SCHAFFER MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

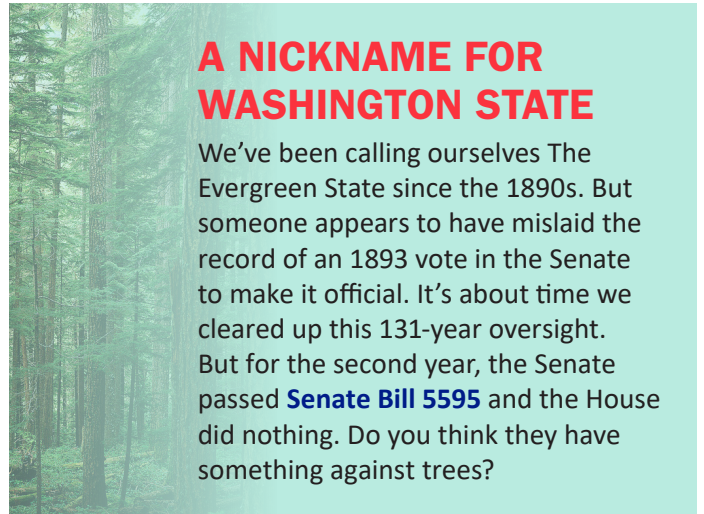
A segment of State Highway 6 through the community of Adna in Lewis County will be named in honor of State Patrolman Justin Schaffer, under Senate Joint Memorial 8008. Schaffer was killed March 24, 2020, as he laid out spike strips on Interstate 5 to stop a fleeing robbery suspect. The driver swerved around the spikes and struck Schaffer – today he is serving a 45-year sentence. The measure creates a six-mile remembrance for Schaffer in the community where he grew up. Let us never forget his sacrifice.



Credit: Army Corps of Engineers.

PINNIPED PREDATION

One of my biggest disappointments this year was the last-minute defeat of a \$1.5 million appropriation to combat sea lions on Columbia River tributaries. Though money was provided in the Senate budget, House Democratic budget-writers balked at funding efforts to control these predators. We'll need to try again next year – the survival of our salmon runs is at stake.

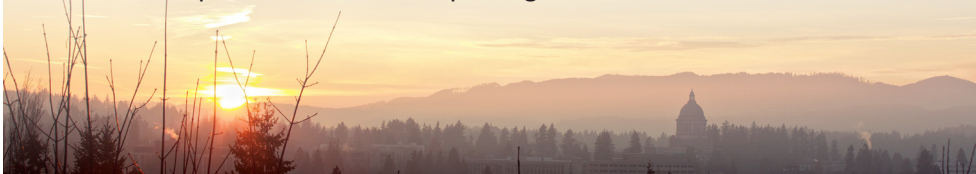


A NICKNAME FOR WASHINGTON STATE

We've been calling ourselves The Evergreen State since the 1890s. But someone appears to have mislaid the record of an 1893 vote in the Senate to make it official. It's about time we cleared up this 131-year oversight. But for the second year, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 5595](#) and the House did nothing. Do you think they have something against trees?

REVITALIZING LEGISLATURE'S 'SUNSHINE COMMITTEE'

Last year, the Legislature's advisory committee on public records got so tired of rebuffs from lawmakers that it considered a motion to disband. I represent Senate Republicans on this "Sunshine Committee" and I sponsored legislation this year to give public records a higher priority ([Senate Bills 5779](#) and [6262](#)). Sadly, these measures died in a Senate committee without a vote. The disinterest helps make the case for passing them.



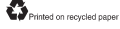
PROTECTING SIGNATURE GATHERERS

Signature gathering for initiatives and referendums is a protected activity under the Washington constitution. But last year, there were disturbing reports of harassment of initiative campaigns. I sponsored [Senate Bill 5820](#), to establish 'buffer zones' around signature gathering activities. Unfortunately, this measure did not advance.

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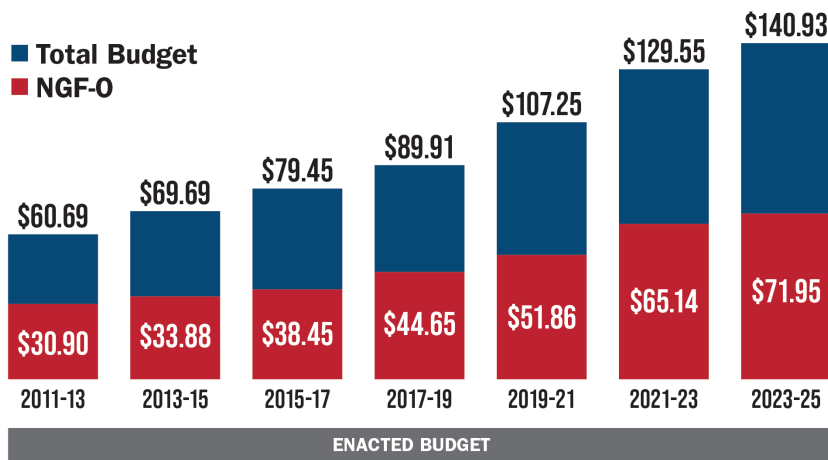
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STATE SPENDING DOUBLES IN A DECADE

dollars in billions



There's good news and bad news about this year's budget. This year's \$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 originally proposed. But the trajectory remains perilously high – state spending has doubled in a decade. Over the long term, this trend cannot be sustained. Indeed, in this time of higher prices at the gas station and the grocery store, holding the line on taxes isn't enough. We ought to be considering tax relief instead.

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