



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

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

**Can you believe it? The Legislature passed an income tax.** For nearly a century, advocates of higher taxes and spending have been trying to convince the people of Washington state that an income tax would be good for them. This year they gave up and passed the darned thing whether the people want it or not.

In many ways this was the signature bill of the 2026 legislative session. We saw the same attitude on dozens of other issues as the Legislature's Democratic leadership, emboldened by nine sessions of one-party control, threw off the shackles of self-restraint. The result was skyrocketing state spending, unsustainable budgeting, and policies that enhance the power of government while limiting the public's voice. And of course there are big new taxes to pay for it all.

In this report, we'll tell you about the highlights and low points of the 60 days we spent in Olympia. In many ways this was a productive year for Southwest Washington and the 19th Legislative District. Unfortunately our accomplishments were overshadowed by disastrous policies adopted in the name of progressive dogma. We hope you will take a moment to send a letter or an email and let us know what you think. We believe government should serve the people and not the other way around. **Your opinions matter to us.**



Sen. Jeff Wilson



Rep. Jim Walsh



Rep. Joel McEntire

## INCOME TAX COMING YOUR WAY!

**The biggest bill of Washington's 2026 legislative session flouts the will of Washington voters and creates an income tax likely to be extended to all of us**

**Of all the issues debated in this year's just-completed legislative session,** Washington's brand-new income tax stands above them all, enacted by a Democratic majority in defiance of constitutional law, adamant voter opposition, and nearly a century of Washington legal and political tradition.

It was the centerpiece of a session that doubled down on the disturbing trends of recent years, as majority lawmakers increased spending and the power of government, and continued pursuing policies making Washington one of the most expensive states in the country to live and work. The session ended March 12 after 60 days in Olympia, and from start to finish, your 19th District delegation was in the thick of the battle, fighting on the side of the people.

### **Starts as high-earners tax**

Though the new 9.9 percent income tax was described as "a tax on millionaires," **Senate Bill 6346** imposes the tax on everyone in the state starting in 2028, with a deduction for the first \$1 million of income. This distinction is important because the deduction could be reduced by a future Legislature with a simple majority vote. During debate in the House and Senate, the majority defeated amendments designed to protect the middle class, signaling that a bigger, broader tax could be the next shoe to drop.

*Continued on next page*

## INCOME TAX/ From Page 1

The bill is part of a strategy to shift this longtime battle from the ballot to the courts. In 1933, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that income is property and must be taxed uniformly, as required by the constitution. That means a graduated income tax requires a constitutional amendment, and for that a public vote is required. But voters keep saying no, 10 times since 1934.

This year's law ignores that requirement. Income tax advocates anticipate legal challenges will go the highest level, giving the state Supreme Court an opportunity to overturn that 1933 decision. No public vote would be needed.

Public opposition remains strong. A total 118,000 unique individuals signed on to the Legislature's website to express opposition to the bill when it was heard in the House and Senate, a new record. But majority Democrats were determined to pass the measure, and the bill was signed into law March 30 by Gov. Bob Ferguson.



**An unprecedented 24-hour debate** took place when the income tax came to House floor March 9 and 10. Republicans offered amendments to address constitutional concerns, tackle implementation problems and protect the middle class, but nearly all were rejected by the Democratic majority.

## SKYROCKETING SPENDING DRIVES INCOME TAX

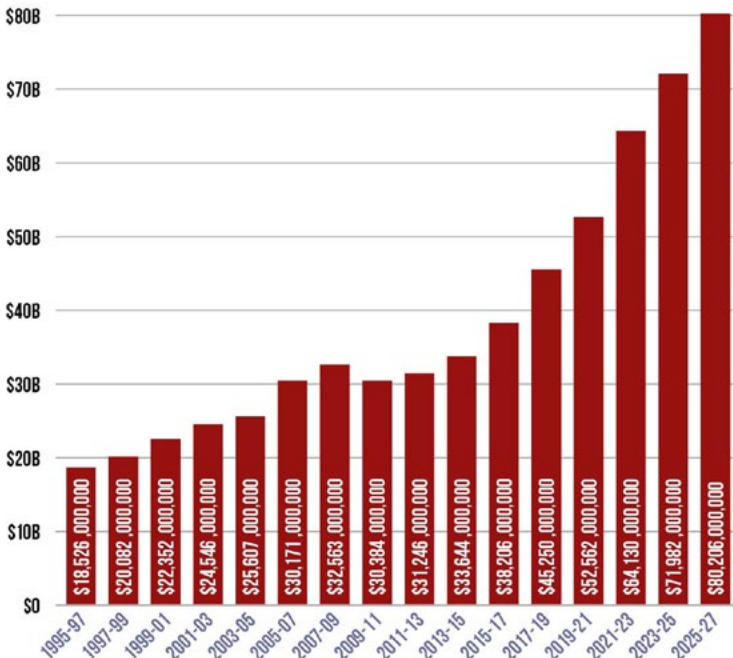
### At current spending rates, \$10B deficit possible in 2027-29

**What's behind this push for an income tax?** It's what happens when your Legislature keeps spending more money than comes in, year after year, and it raises every tax on the books – and still it can't admit it has a spending problem.

Washington's budget for 2025-27 hit \$80.2 billion this session, double what we spent 10 years ago. Spending has risen twice as

### State spending doubles in a decade

#### 30-year operating budget history

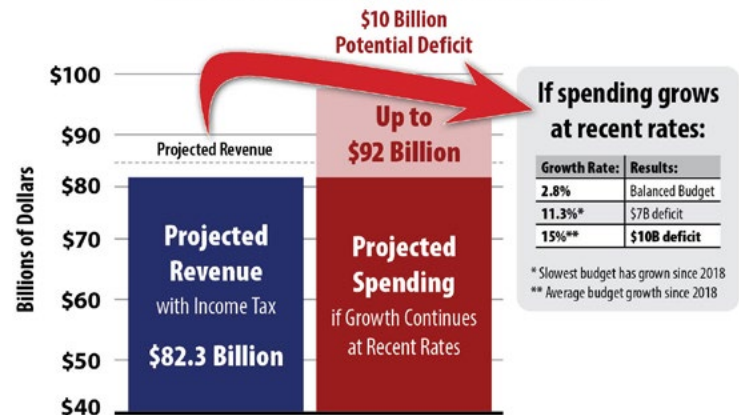


fast as median family income and it's getting us in big trouble. Last year it put us in a deficit, but our colleagues wouldn't consider course corrections. Instead they passed the biggest tax increase in state history. Now they are doubling down with an income tax – and still it won't be enough.

The only way our next budget will balance will be if our colleagues can keep spending growth in 2027-29 to 2.8 percent. We wish them luck, but the average spending growth under their watch is 15 percent. At that rate we are looking at a \$10 billion deficit. **So how long do you think it will be before Olympia expands that income tax to all of us?**

### \$10 Billion Deficit Next Biennium Even With an Income Tax?

Based on projected revenues and spending growth trends





Reps. Jim Walsh and Joel McEntire on the House floor.

## PENSION RAID RAISES CONCERNS

To cover the state's fast-rising spending, majority Democrats this year passed **House Bill 2034** to sweep a projected surplus of more than \$3.3 billion from a police and firefighter pension fund. Walsh helped lead opposition on the House floor during a furious two-hour debate.

This breach of fiduciary duty risks federal IRS violations and threatens the tax-exempt status of this state's pension system, Walsh says. And it sets a dangerous precedent. If Washington is willing to dip into pension funds to keep up spending, no retirement system managed by the state is truly safe.

## ANTI-SHERIFF BILL SPARES PACIFIC COUNTY'S DANIEL GARCIA

**Daniel Garcia gets to keep his badge**, and that's the only good thing we can say about **Senate Bill 5974**. This bill gives an unelected board the power to fire elected county sheriffs. At the statehouse this year we called it the "Anti-Sheriff Bill" because it would give the Criminal Justice Training Commission the power to overrule the people and force independent elected officials to follow political mandates from Olympia on policing and non-cooperation with federal immigration authorities.



Daniel Garcia

The original bill also threatened to send Pacific County Sheriff Daniel Garcia to the unemployment line. It imposes a long list of qualifications for sheriffs and police chiefs, and Garcia, a newcomer to law enforcement when elected in 2022, falls short of the bill's five-year experience requirement. Luckily a striking amendment on the House floor grandfathered-in current officeholders. Garcia has the only certification he needs, from the voters of Pacific County, and Olympia has no business saying otherwise. If only our colleagues would recognize that principle statewide.

# MORE POWER FOR GOVERNMENT

## COMMON THEME IN SESSION'S MOST TROUBLING BILLS

This year's Anti-Sheriff Bill was an example of a disturbing trend in this year's legislation, one of a number of bills this session that enhanced Olympia's power at the expense of the people. Others included:

**THREATENING COUNTY AUDITORS: Senate Bill 5892** forces county elections officials to take a side in Olympia's war on the feds. The measure threatens them with prison time if they divulge voter information lawfully requested by the U.S. Department of Justice. The bill makes cooperation a felony offense, and marks another power grab designed to reduce the independence of elected officials.

**GOVERNMENT FISHING EXPEDITIONS: Senate Bill 5925** greatly increases the authority of the state attorney general's office to go after political opponents, by expanding its power to make "Civil Investigative Demands" on businesses, individuals, nonprofit organizations and law enforcement agencies. This chilling legislation allows the AG to demand records and compel testimony without proof of a crime, in hopes of finding a violation that could lead to charges.

**ENDING TAXPAYER PROTECTIONS: House Bill 2442** dramatically expands the authority of cities and counties to raise taxes and fees by loosening safeguards for taxpayers. Among other things, the bill ends requirements for voter approval, removes limits on tax increases and their duration, and erodes voter oversight and accountability.

**BILLS THAT DIDN'T PASS** were just as troubling, and any of them might return next year. Other agenda-driven legislation included bills to prosecute violations of civil environmental laws as felony crimes (**Senate Bill 5360**), prevent law enforcement from shutting down homeless camps on public property (**House Bill 2489**), and eliminate juvenile offenses from the voter-approved "Three Strikes" law that sends incorrigible felons to prison for life (**Senate Bill 5945**).

**ADDING INSULT TO INJURY**, 26 bills this year were passed with emergency clauses or similar language, prohibiting the people from filing referendums to overturn them. Their only option is to file an initiative, which requires double the signatures and creates additional legal hurdles. Yet few of these bills involve actual emergencies. **Is it any surprise that the income tax is one of them?**

# 19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT • 2026 SESSION REPORT

**Sen. Jeff Wilson** found himself in a hearing this year of the Senate State Government, Tribal Affairs and Elections Committee, listening to union officials testify in favor of sharp restrictions on initiative signature drives. They said paying by-the-signature gives canvassers an incentive to forge people's names. So Wilson asked a simple question. Could they identify a single case of fraud in the last 13 years?

They promised to get back to him. Three months later, he's still waiting. Wilson already knows the answer. There are no cases. As ranking Republican member on the Senate panel overseeing elections, Wilson frequently finds himself defending Washington voters against legislation that would reduce the public's voice. In 2026 he led opposition to **Senate Bill 5973**, this year's "initiative killer bill," a measure using nonexistent fraud to justify restrictions on a constitutional right. Democrats quietly dropped the effort, though the measure could return next year.

A Longview businessman serving his sixth year in the Senate, Wilson is a voice for government accountability, open public records, and the rights guaranteed to the public by state and federal constitutions. Priorities for Wilson next year include new approaches to affordable housing and continued efforts to reduce sea lion predation on the Columbia.



**Rep. Jim Walsh** played a leading role on the House floor this session, offering a steady stream of amendments and delivering extended floor speeches to push back on policies he believed would grow government, raise costs, and weaken local control. From affordability and public safety to new taxes, election rules, and Attorney General authority, Walsh repeatedly stepped in to force debate and highlight long-term consequences for Washington families and communities.



That effort came to a head during the historic, nearly 25-hour floor fight over this year's income tax legislation. Walsh helped lead the debate, offering amendments to require voter approval, protect taxpayers from future expansion, and improve transparency about how the tax could grow over time. While those proposals were rejected, the extended debate helped bring public attention to the risks and ensured lawmakers were on record.

Walsh also spoke out about decisions being pulled away from local communities. One example was **House Bill 2266**, which limits the ability of cities and counties to decide where certain homeless housing and shelter projects can be located. Walsh warned the measure weakens local control, reduces community input, and could create public safety and neighborhood concerns. He argued that decisions affecting local communities should be made closer to home, not dictated from Olympia.

Even when amendments were voted down, Walsh used the process to raise concerns, push for safeguards, and increase transparency. Throughout the session, he remained a consistent voice for affordability, accountability, public safety and limited government.



**Rep. Joel McEntire** this session focused on improving—or defeating—legislation through the amendment process. Recognizing the challenges of advancing strong, district-focused policy through the Legislature, he authored more than a dozen well-crafted amendments addressing public safety,

child care, construction and labor, government spending, firearms, budgets, parents' rights, and education.

The lengthy floor debate in the House over the income tax underscored the importance of amendments in the legislative process. While some may dismiss this as a delay tactic, it reflects a fundamental part of the legislative process.

Amendments provide an opportunity to improve legislation, ensure minority participation, and promote transparency and accountability—even when those ideas are ultimately rejected. They also help shape the final outcome of public policy. In this case, House Republicans used the process to highlight the majority party's refusal to adopt protections for taxpayers, including proposals to require voter approval before expanding the tax, notify workers if income thresholds change, and allow a public vote.

Looking forward, McEntire plans to continue his work in the next legislative session to advance permitting reform and combat invasive European green crabs.



## SMOOTH SAILING ON THE COLUMBIA

Last year's Legislature slashed funding for the Wahkiakum County Ferry, but this year our district won it back and then some. This vital transportation link provides service between Puget Island and Westport, OR, and is the only Columbia River crossing between Astoria and Longview. Wilson passed a budget amendment in the Senate Transportation Committee restoring the cut and then some, covering the ferry's entire operating deficit -- \$1 million in all. State funding will provide relief to Wahkiakum County taxpayers.



## TWO INITIATIVES ADVANCE TO BALLOT

Walsh was among Republican lawmakers who participated in a listening session in the House Feb. 3 after Democrats refused to hold hearings on a pair of initiatives submitted by the people. IL26-638 protects girls' sports, while IL-26-001 restores parental rights in public schools. Because the Legislature took no action, both initiatives will appear on the ballot in November, and Washington voters will decide whether they become law.

## BILL KEEPS COWLITZ COUNTY RURAL

Senate Bill 6149, sponsored by Wilson, preserves Cowlitz County's rural designation and allows it to compete with the state's 28 other rural counties for public facilities and economic development funding. Recent population increases put Cowlitz County in the same league as King, Pierce and Spokane counties, the state's largest. Passage of Wilson's bill keeps the competition even.

## KIT HOME BILL WINS FINAL APPROVAL

Four years of work paid off for Wilson this session as his kit home bill won final approval from the Legislature and was signed into law by the governor. Senate Bill 5552 directs the State Building Code Council to develop a streamlined set of regulations for standardized kit homes, a promising construction method that harkens back a century and could help relieve the state's current housing shortage. The idea is that kit home designs need only be approved once, rather than going through project-by-project approvals at the local level.



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## 2026 SESSION REPORT • 19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

### CAPITAL BUDGET LAUNCHES PROJECTS ACROSS SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

In this year's capital budget, 19th District lawmakers obtained funding for projects across Southwest Washington. The capital budget uses bonds and other sources of funds to pay for new construction and other permanent assets. Projects winning funding this year include:

- Modernization of Evaline School in Lewis County (\$6 million),
- Improvements to David Story Field at Lower Columbia College in Longview (\$3 million),
- Improvements to Julius A. Wendt Elementary School in Cathlamet (\$850,000),
- Upgrades to local emergency response systems (\$410,000)
- Reconstruction of the American Legion Veteran Housing and Resource Center in Raymond (\$286,000),
- A new well for Puget Island in Wahkiakum County (\$258,000),
- A new water main for South Forest Street in Westport (\$250,000),
- Response efficiency funding for the Longview Fire Department (\$155,000),
- A new roof for the Eagle Pointe Village Apartments in Cathlamet (\$144,000),
- A new roof for the Eagles Apartments in Raymond (\$134,000), and
- Restoration of Skamokawa Grange Hall (\$50,000).

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