

# 23<sup>rd</sup> DISTRICT STATE LEGISLATORS

Christine Rolfes • Drew Hansen • Tarra Simmons

2022 SESSION IN REVIEW • YOUR LAWMAKERS AT WORK

## Senator Christine Rolfes



### COMMITTEES

- Ways & Means (Chair)
- Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks

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## Representative Drew Hansen



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- Civil Rights & Judiciary (Chair)
- Appropriations
- College & Workforce Development

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## Representative Tarra Simmons



### COMMITTEES

- Civil Rights & Judiciary (Vice Chair)
- Health Care & Wellness
- Public Safety
- Rules

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The Legislature adjourned in March after a historic session with remarkable progress on many fronts, including an innovative \$17 billion transportation package, major investments in public schools, over \$500 million to create more housing and services for homeless people, measures to address the climate crisis, and a tax cut for small businesses. At the same time, we added to the state's reserve funds so that we are better able to weather the next economic downturn and maintain our historically high credit rating. That means lower interest rates for state-issued debt to fund critical infrastructure and transportation projects.

We made significant investments in helping small businesses with a tax credit that eliminates or reduces the business and occupations ("B&O") tax for all businesses that gross \$125,000 or less each year. That means in the next 5 years, small businesses in Washington State will pay hundreds of millions less in taxes. Additionally, we passed:

- \$100 million in grants to hospitality businesses who have been some of the hardest hit during the pandemic
- Legislation to lower the liquor license fee to provide small businesses a break on costs
- Financial support for convention-based businesses
- Tax incentives to attract more film production to Washington
- Grants for arts and cultural organizations that anchor our main streets and downtowns

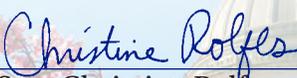
These economic development measures should provide real and measurable support for small businesses across the state as we all try to come back together from the pandemic.

We made targeted investments in education by increasing funding to ensure our schools are fully staffed next year when enrollments are expected to rebound. We added funding for additional nurses and counselors to support students' physical, mental, and emotional health. New funding will also expand access to financial education, ensure all families can engage with their child's school in their native language, and make it easier for families to apply for free and reduced-price meals.

We increased access to primary health care and took steps to bolster the health care workforce with new nursing programs and loan forgiveness programs. We made progress on reducing the high cost of prescription drugs and starting next year, the price of insulin – a life-saving drug taken by thousands of our friends and neighbors every day – will be capped at \$35 a month here in Washington.

After two difficult years, we are looking forward to moving out of the pandemic safely by ensuring everyone has the support they need to recover together. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our offices if you have questions or concerns or if we can help connect you with the support and services you deserve.

It's our honor to serve you,

  
Sen. Christine Rolfes

  
Rep. Drew Hansen

  
Rep. Tarra Simmons

# Christine Rolfes • Drew Hansen • Tarra Simmons



## MOVE AHEAD WASHINGTON BRINGS RELIEF TO FERRY SYSTEM

This year, the Legislature passed Move Ahead Washington, a 16

year, \$17 billion transportation package that creates a sustainable, achievable future for our transportation sector.

Move Ahead Washington delivers historic investments to **preserve our roads, reduce carbon emissions, and provide safe, accessible, and affordable options to get around.**

Crucially, this package also brings much-needed relief to Washington State Ferries. It includes \$1.3 billion to build four new hybrid-electric ferries, \$193 million to electrify and retrofit two older ferries, and an additional \$510 million to improve ferry operations. **This was a major priority for our delegation: this package makes the largest investment in Washington State Ferries in recent history, which should help address the staffing shortages that led to service cancellations over the last year.** It also provides \$32 million for free fares for anyone 18 and under (walk-on & drive on). Cities across the country have embraced the idea of free fares for kids and we are glad our state became one of the first to adopt the policy statewide.

## LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS

The package also includes funding to address some of our biggest transportation challenges, investments to improve the way we move around our community, and some toll relief for drivers.

- **Warren Avenue Bridge:** \$25 million for pedestrian and bike safety improvements so people feel safe – even if they want to hop off their bike and take in the view.
- **Gorst corridor:** \$75 million to begin the effort of widening Highway 3 through the Gorst corridor and \$35 million for widening and safety improvements on Highway 3 in Belfair. It is good to see progress on this longstanding traffic problem.
- **Toll relief:** Reducing toll rates for passenger vehicles on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge by up to 75 cents, from \$5.25 to \$4.50.
- **Terminal traffic:** \$18.5 million to address Highway 104 ferry traffic gridlock that has impacted downtown Kingston.
- **More transit options:** \$3.5 million annually for Kitsap Transit to support more transit options and investments into multimodal transportation. Plus, youth ages 18 and under will ride free on ALL transit.

## WHAT THIS PACKAGE DOES DIFFERENTLY TO SERVE WASHINGTONIANS

### Preserving existing infrastructure

Move Ahead Washington invests an unprecedented \$3 billion to fix our existing infrastructure, including planning and designing the replacement of the I-5 bridge over the Columbia River between Vancouver and Portland. The plan also addresses replacement of the US 2 Trestle in Snohomish County, widening of SR 18 in King County, upgrading both the Hood River bridge between Oregon and Washington and the I-5 Bridge over the Nisqually delta, and making improvements to HOV lanes on I-5. By honoring our responsibility to complete projects we've started, we're also creating good, family-wage construction jobs to make repairs across the state.

### Taking bold action to reduce carbon emissions

This package takes decisive action against climate change by putting \$5.4 billion toward electrification and the expansion of affordable, accessible options to get from point A to point B. Our community deserves diverse choices so we can use what works for us—whether walking, rolling, driving, or riding—while reducing our carbon footprint.

## Standing with Ukraine

We want to acknowledge the heartache we all feel watching the unjust and unprovoked Russian acts of war on the people of Ukraine. Washington has always been a welcoming place for refugees and we made sure to include over \$30 million in the 2022 supplemental budget to support refugee assistance organizations for people who settle here in Washington, including recent arrivals from Afghanistan.

## The Home of Pickleball



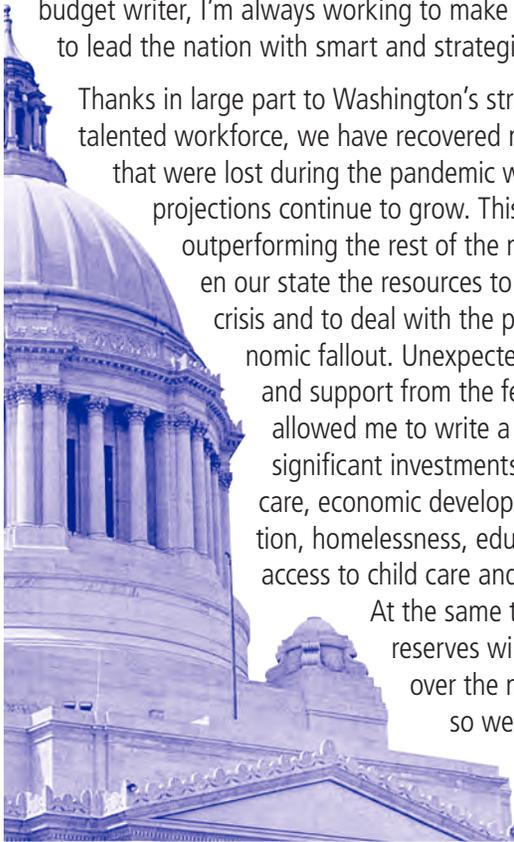
The growing sport of pickleball originated right here in the 23rd District more than 50 years ago and this year the Legislature voted to make it the official sport of the state of Washington, joining other symbols like the state tree (Western Hemlock) and state fish (steelhead trout).

## STRONG ECONOMY, STRONG STATE BUDGET

Our state has been ranked the best place to live and work by US News and World Report the last two years. As the Senate's lead budget writer, I'm always working to make sure we continue to lead the nation with smart and strategic fiscal policy.

Thanks in large part to Washington's strong economy and talented workforce, we have recovered nearly all the jobs that were lost during the pandemic while state revenue projections continue to grow. This steady recovery is outperforming the rest of the nation and has given our state the resources to confront the health crisis and to deal with the pandemic's economic fallout. Unexpected revenue growth and support from the federal government allowed me to write a budget that made significant investments in housing, health care, economic development, transportation, homelessness, education, poverty, access to child care and climate change.

At the same time, our budget reserves will grow to \$4 billion over the next four years so we are prepared for another crisis or downturn in the economy.



## CLIMATE ACTION AND SALMON RECOVERY



Addressing the climate crisis and protecting threatened species and ecosystems is a top priority for me. This session I made sure the budget added \$180 million to fund salmon restoration projects

here in Kitsap and across the state – plus additional measures to protect kelp and eelgrass beds, and remove derelict vessels from our waters. More than \$2 billion will help crews improve fish passage infrastructure on roads and highways across the state. The Legislature also made historic investments in community solar projects, electric charging infrastructure and incentives to speed up the transition to electric vehicles. Our state's public lands and recreational facilities will also receive extra funding for maintenance and repairs, and we are improving our open spaces locally at North Kitsap Heritage Park and Illahee Preserve in East Bremerton.



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

In late March we celebrated the opening of Pendleton Place in Bremerton – Kitsap County's first supportive housing facility. Pendleton Place will be home for about 70 people facing homelessness and struggling with mental health, substance use disorders and other disabling conditions. Investments like Pendleton Place will make a huge difference in individual lives while improving the health of the entire community. I worked hard this session to make strategic budget investments that will build more affordable housing, help seniors and families remain in their homes, transition people living in unsanctioned encampments to permanent housing, and to expand behavioral health services.



## EXPANDING PUBLIC BROADBAND

We all learned during the pandemic that high-speed broadband internet is an essential utility, just like power and water. Over the last two years, I worked closely with a bipartisan group of legislators to make sure that every community in the state can build out robust public broadband, starting with passage of my Public Broadband Act (**HB 1336**) in 2021.

I also strongly supported efforts to make sure that public funding for broadband supports public networks—not indirect subsidies to for-profit companies. This year’s capital budget includes \$100 million for broadband infrastructure projects, with \$50 million going to the State Broadband Office, \$25 million for unserved areas through the Public Works Board, and another \$25 million for projects addressing underserved areas through the Community Economic Revitalization Board. Because of my efforts to ensure this funding goes to public entities and our work to make public broadband a reality, Jefferson County PUD is receiving over \$20 million in grants to build out a new publicly-owned broadband network. Kitsap County PUD is also benefiting from \$1.5 million in grants to complete broadband expansion projects. I worked very closely with Kitsap County PUD to inform our statewide broadband policy, and I look forward to supporting Kitsap County PUD as they work to bring affordable broadband to more Kitsap County residents.

I’m proud of our work to expand public broadband throughout the state so that families have high-speed, affordable internet access. We still have a long way to go, but our bipartisan efforts laid the groundwork for local governments across Washington State to expand public broadband over the next several years. The Washington Public Utility Districts Association recognized my work in this field last year, awarding me their 2021 “Legislative Champion” Award.

## WORKFORCE TRAINING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

I have long supported making college and apprenticeships more affordable so people can get decent jobs and support their families. Olympic College now has several degree programs that I helped create—electrical engineering in partnership with Washington State University, and cybersecurity and early childhood education in partnership with Western Washington University. These degree programs allow people to get trained for jobs in a variety of fields in high demand in Kitsap County.

But we need to make sure that people can afford to take advantage of these opportunities. In 2019, I was the prime sponsor of a new law that makes Washington’s public colleges and universities tuition-free for families earning \$50,000 or less—with partial scholarships all the way up to the state’s median income of \$100,000 per year. I built on that work this year, working with a bipartisan group of colleagues to pass **HB 1835**, which increases outreach efforts so that people can take advantage of state, federal, and private scholarships.

We have more work to do to ensure that higher education and workforce training opportunities are available, accessible, and affordable for everyone, but we have made significant progress in the last few years. I am especially grateful for the support and partnership of our community colleges: this year, the community college trustees in Washington State gave me their first-ever “Legislative Partner of the Year” award.



# Rep. Tarra Simmons • 2022 Session in Review

## REP. TARRA SIMMONS

Representing the 23rd District as the first formerly incarcerated member of the Washington Legislature has been the honor of a lifetime. During my first term, I focused my policy advocacy on helping low-income and working-class people as well as bringing my unique perspective to bear on policy affecting formerly incarcerated people. I was proud that the Legislature passed six of my prime-sponsored bills this biennium.



## EASING RE-ENTRY

Last year, I sponsored and passed **HB 1078**, a major civil rights advancement that restores the right to vote to someone convicted of a felony as soon as they are released from Department of Corrections custody. Voting is essential to being a full participant in our community. Restoring the right to vote gives people returning to our communities hope, creates opportunity, and reduces recidivism.

I also passed several other bills that will remove barriers to success for people returning to our communities. **HB 1412** allows judges to provide relief from legal financial obligations (LFOs) to people who are unable to pay them. Formerly incarcerated people already face barriers to employment, education, and housing. On top of that, LFOs can trap those unable to afford them in a lifelong cycle of debt. **HB 1412** allows for some relief while also saving the state from using resources trying to collect money that will never exist. **HB 1818** allows the Department of Corrections to provide housing vouchers for six months after someone leaves incarceration. This will increase a person's chance of finding stable employment, decrease their chance of recidivism, and improves public safety by preventing homelessness. **HB 1411** removes barriers allowing some formerly incarcerated people to work in long-term and vulnerable care.

## EXPANDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE



This year I partnered with the Attorney General to expand and standardize access to charity care. The high cost of healthcare is one of the largest drivers of bankruptcy in our country. To help alleviate this problem, Washington has a charity care law that requires hospitals to forgive some or all of the out-of-pocket costs of essential health care for low-income patients who qualify.

**HB 1616** increased the eligibility for full write-offs of out-of-pocket expenses to 300 percent of the federal poverty level and requires discounts for those earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level, expanding access to free and reduced healthcare to 2.2 million Washingtonians. Healthcare is essential for every Washingtonian, not just the ones who can afford it.

## STATE OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONSUMER ADVOCACY

Prior to the passage of **HB 1086** there were ten different ombuds offices for each of the state's different behavioral health service organizations. My bill created the State Office of Behavioral Health Consumer Advocacy to give more power to behavioral health patients and to root out abuse, corruption, and mistreatment in the behavioral health field. The Washington chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-Washington) named me their 2021 Legislator of the Year for this work.

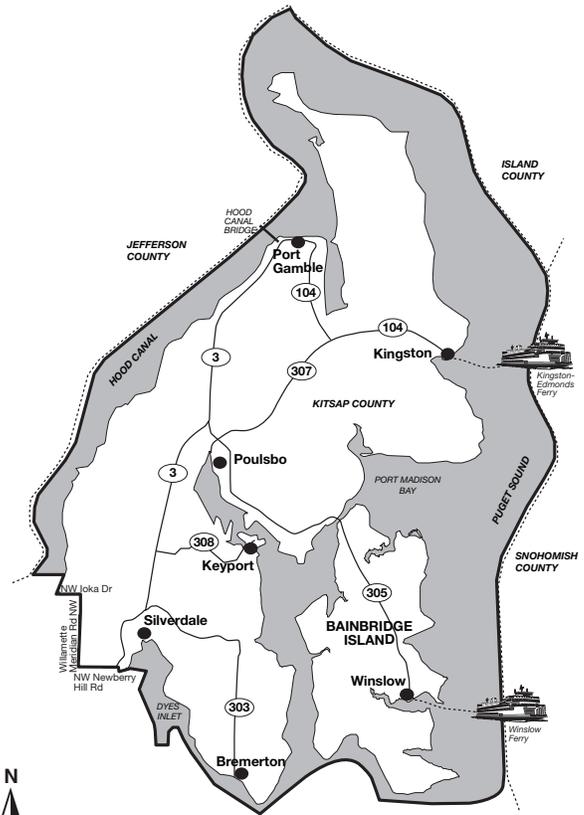
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**23rd Legislative District**