

Speaker Laurie Jinkins
2025 Legislative Session
Opening Day Remarks – as prepared

“Staying Focused”

Thank you, Chairman Choke and Vice-Chair Squally for welcoming us today as we gather here on the traditional lands that the Nisqually have known and cared for since time immemorial.

We’re honored to have you and members of the Nisqually Tribal Council here with us today, as the original stewards of this gathering place. Our government-to-government relationship is an important one, and we look forward to continued partnership with you and Washington’s sovereign tribes in the work we do here.

To Rev. Jones-Barnes, Mr. Winesberry, and Uke Uprising, thank you for kicking off these opening ceremonies in such an uplifting and inspirational way.

Thank you, Rep. Fitzgibbon, and to the members of this House for once again placing your confidence in me.

And to our newest members: You stepped up to represent your communities, bringing fresh voices and perspectives, and I look forward to getting to know you all. Will you please stand and be recognized?

I also want to thank my wife, Laura, our son Wulf, and my mom Donna for their love and support every day, and for their most excellent advice at every turn.

And our great niece, Rory, and niece, Sasha: these two women are on their way to running this world, and they give me so much hope and optimism for the future.

This is the sixth time I’ve had the honor of giving remarks on the opening day of session, and when I thought about what I wanted to say today, a lot of things came to mind.

I could talk about our successes.

Since 2020, we've added nearly 200,000 more housing units across the state. Much more is needed to meet demand, but we can be proud of our historic investments in our Housing Trust Fund.

Over 12,000 more working parents in our state were accessing affordable, quality child care in June of last year versus June of 2021, thanks to the Fair Start for Kids Act and other investments.

We built new regional law enforcement academies, training 540 more officers in the next biennium than we did prior to opening these academies, and departments have seen wait times to train new officers drop from eight months to just 30 days.

I also thought I could talk about how great Washington is doing compared to other states and building on those successes.

We were once again rated the best economy in the nation.*

We were named the state with the best public education on the west coast, and the 4th best in the entire country.**

We were named the most energy-efficient state, and in the top five for quality of life.***

I frequently view those state rankings with skepticism. A rating is only meaningful when you look at what's actually measured.

But the criteria our state is being judged on gives me reason to feel hopeful.

Our economy ranks high because of our innovation potential, our investments in research and development, and our highly skilled and educated workforce.

Our education system ranks highly because of our investments in school funding and teacher compensation, and our Washington College Grant that helps families pay for college.

Our quality of life ranks highly because of our worker protections, our voting and civil rights protections, and our clean air and clean water.

We know there's more to be done in all these areas. Each of us spent the past year listening to people in our districts talk about how they and their families are experiencing our state's economy, our education system, and our quality of life. They told us what they need help with and that's why we're all here.

I also thought I could talk about the challenges that will impact our work this session.

Our economy is strong, but we're facing a shortfall in our state budget.

Washington's growing population means there is more demand than ever for housing, education, health care, and services that people expect and deserve.

At the same time, inflation has increased the cost of building housing, operating our schools, and providing health care and other services.

Families in every corner of our state are feeling the cost of living in their budgets, and we're feeling it in the state budget, too.

Despite our strong economy, we're working with less expected revenue while trying to do more for our people.

I was first elected to the Legislature during the Great Recession, when our state faced an unprecedented budget shortfall and deep cuts were made with long-lasting consequences.

One of the lessons we learned in the Great Recession is that failing to meet growing needs in our state hurts Washingtonians, plain and simple.

Washingtonians just told us they don't want big, harmful cuts to schools, or to childcare, or to clean air, water and active transportation, or to health care.

We have a responsibility to invest in what matters most – our people. We will protect the investments we've made to help working families, AND have a balanced budget. That is what our constituents expect.

Our starting point will be reviewing the budget and how we fund the priorities Washingtonians want and expect.

We'll scrutinize our spending, and look at revenue options that are balanced, fair, and move us toward a less regressive tax structure.

The other challenge impacting our work is what happens in the other Washington.

This isn't our first rodeo with the incoming administration, and all indications are that it won't be any less chaotic or hostile to Washington's way of life.

Our state has taken proactive steps to protect things like access to reproductive health care, to prevent rollbacks of our progress on climate, and to safeguard people's civil rights.

And we'll continue to be proactive and vigilant, looking for places where the state can step up to protect Washington values.

We will govern during these uncertain times as we always do: leading with courage, compassion, and hope.

We will reject attempts to divide us with fear, anger, and hate.

We will center the people and communities directly impacted by the decisions we make.

This is the most diverse House of Representatives in the history of this state, any way you measure it: by lived experience, by racial background, by education, by gender, by the communities we represent.

We know this diversity means our conversations are more robust – and often more challenging. But the solutions are ultimately better for the people of our state.

I also want to take a moment to recognize another change happening in just a couple of days.

Most of my time here in the Legislature has been during Governor Inslee's tenure, and I want to thank him for his leadership and service to the people of Washington.

Over the last 12 years, Gov. Inslee has made fighting climate change a top priority, and his efforts made Washington a leader in the transition to clean energy and protected our clean air and water.

His leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic saved lives in our state – 18,000 over a two-year period. Some critiqued his decisions, but no one can deny that Washington fared better than most other states, and as someone who works in public health I am grateful for many of those decisions and the lives that were saved.

We head into this session with a new incoming governor, Governor-Elect Ferguson. His long history of fighting for the people in the realms of civil rights, violence prevention, consumer protection, health care costs, opioid prevention and more makes me excited and hopeful for the work we can do together.

Everything I've mentioned is important, because our challenges tell us what we have to do, our successes tell us how to think about addressing those challenges, and our rankings tell us where we're making progress.

But what I really want to say today is that we already know what's important to the people of our state.

Affordability for Washington families is important, and we will elevate our efforts to look at where we can bring down costs for people and help make sure they can afford housing, childcare, health care – the basic costs that are hitting family budgets the hardest.

Good jobs and a strong economy are important, and we'll continue to invest in a quality, well-trained workforce.

Strong communities where our neighbors feel safe and our schools are thriving is important, and we'll continue our efforts to reduce crime, help people access treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, and invest in schools and improved results for our kids – the future of Washington.

Protecting Washington's way of life is important, and we're going to stand up for trans people, for immigrants, and for all Washingtonians who find themselves under attack by those who choose to divide us rather than unite us.

As long as we stay focused on making sure people are better off by our decisions, that working families are better off, that kids are better off and have a brighter future, that our communities are better off and stronger and safer...as long as we stay focused on that, we will get through our challenges and we will keep moving this state forward.

I'd like to close with something a dear friend and mentor of mine, who once served in this chamber, used to tell me.

We lost former Rep. Dennis Flannigan last year, and I miss him terribly. When he retired from the legislature, I was elected to serve in the seat he'd retired from. We were friends for 30 years and he never pulled any punches when giving me advice.

His most frequent advice was quoting another giant we lost last year, Gov. Dan Evans, saying, "I would rather cross the aisle than cross the people."

Their shared advice is something I hope we all heed as we work to meet the challenges of the 2025 legislative session.

And now, let's get to work.

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* [Best & Worst State Economies \(2025\)](#), WalletHub

** [The Best States for Public Education in 2025](#), Consumer Affairs

*** [Most & Least Energy Efficient States \(2025\)](#), WalletHub; [These are America's best states for quality of life in 2024](#), CNBC