



Washington State Legislative Report to the 38th District

Summer 2019

Friends and neighbors,

For the first time in a decade, the Legislature was able to pass a biennial budget and finish the 105-day "long-session" on time. Although we worked some very long days and nights, it was worth it to be able to pass great policies and budgets that set us on a course for the future.

Every two years, the legislature must pass an operating budget. Even though the budget is about funding, it still reflects our values in the choices we make about which programs to fund and which investments to make. We are proud that the budget we passed this year puts people first and makes critical investments in Snohomish County and around the state.

Highlights of the operating budget include:

- Early Childhood Education & Assistance: \$35m.
- Protect Orcas & Improve habitat: \$31m.
- Testing sexual assault kits backlog: \$9m.
- Community behavioral health beds & services: \$47m.
- Permanent supportive housing & youth homelessness: \$15m.
- Additional special education funding: \$155m.

If you have questions about the budgets, policies, or other things happening in Olympia or in your neighborhood, please feel free to reach out to any of our offices.



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Health Care

Some of the most frequent concerns we hear about from people in our communities are around being able to afford and access care. This session we took some big steps to ensure that everyone can get the services and support they need for their health and well-being.

Cascade Care

Washington families deserve health care they can afford and that they can count on. Being uninsured or having a steep deductible keeps people from getting preventative care or seeing a doctor when they are sick. This is why our new public health insurance program, Cascade Care, is so important. The new health care plans will be available on the

state exchange and will have lower deductibles and more services available before the deductible.

Long-term care trust act

Everyone gets older, and many people will need assistance with daily activities like cooking, bathing or taking medicine. For many families, the costs of long-term care for spouses or parents as they age creates a significant financial burden.

The Long Term Care Trust Act is a new social insurance program that will help defray the cost of long term care, giving families a little breathing room as they take care of the ones they love.

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Affordable Housing

Washington is facing an affordable housing and homelessness crisis—every community is experiencing this crisis.

One step we took to help senior citizens and veterans stay in their homes was to **change the property tax exemption** program. Previously there was a statewide \$40,000 income limit for the exemption, which worked well in some areas, but not in Snohomish County, where the median income is nearly \$70,000. The exemption will now be adjusted based on the median income of the county.

In addition to the investment that the state makes in affordable housing, this year we passed a bill to help local governments produce **transitional and supportive housing**. The bill creates up to \$400 million in bonding capacity at no cost to homeowners, renters, property owners, or developers—an all-around win.

We also passed a bill that will result in **more stability in housing** by providing longer notices of rent increases and prohibiting increases before the end of a lease. Last summer, a group of people who live at the Vintage Apartments in Marysville contacted us. Most of them are retired and living on fixed incomes and many were being forced out by a recent rent increase without adequate notice. This change will give people, like the Vintage residents, more time to make decisions when rent goes up.



Protecting the Environment for Future Generations

Some of the measures we passed to **protect the southern resident killer whale population from going extinct**, include reducing vessel noise and interference with the whales, reducing toxic chemicals that harm orcas and the salmon they eat, and increasing salmon production.



With the upcoming fire season projected to be as destructive as the record-setting seasons in recent years, we passed legislation to **accelerate forest health, allow prescribed burning, and reduce wildlife fire risk and damage**.

While our state is proud of its hydropower-based, low carbon electricity system, almost a third of the power supplied to Washington customers comes from coal and natural gas. This session we passed legislation to **transition to 100 percent clean energy** by 2045, which includes innovative provisions to cap costs and smooth the ability of utilities to transition.

Tribal Communities Across Washington

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) will expand to a statewide program in all of our schools. SEL will help students build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and life. Teaching SEL can raise test scores, decrease student discipline, promote a safe school climate, and increase student well-being. These are all skills that our young people need to be successful in life.

Legislative Report to the 38th District

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Native American Voting Rights Act

Indian tribes will be able to request ballot drop boxes on reservations, use nontraditional residential addresses by any person residing on an Indian reservation or lands for voter registration purposes, and use tribal identification for electronic voter registration where the Secretary of State can obtain a copy of the applicant's signature. Our democracy works best when we all have the opportunity to participate. When entire communities are denied access to the ballot box, lawmakers need to take a look at systemic issues that need to be addressed.

Indian Health Advisory Council

Native Americans die prematurely at a higher rate than almost any other racial group, so we established the Governor's Indian Health Advisory Council to figure out why. The Council will work to get full funding from the federal government. This is a good way to fund our health initiatives and ensure that the federal government fulfills its treaty responsibilities for health care in Indian country.

Securing and Protecting our Workforce

Post-Secondary Education

740,000 job openings are expected over the next few years and 70 percent of them will need credentials beyond high school. We brought students, parents, higher education institutions, workers, and businesses to the table and passed the **Workforce Education Investment Act**, which will:

- Create a new Washington College Grant to make public college tuition free for families earning less than \$50,000 per year, with partial scholarships for families up to the state's median income.
- Make career pathways a priority by expanding programs that guide students through community and technical colleges or apprenticeships, and increases counseling.

Giving nurses a break

Patient care suffers when hospitals are short-staffed and nurses don't get proper breaks. Tired nurses get burned out, which leads to mistakes, low morale and job dissatisfaction. This year we finally passed a bill to ensure that nurses and other frontline healthcare workers in Washington get uninterrupted meal and rest breaks, which will lead to better patient outcomes.

Making skills, not past wages, be the basis for paychecks

When salary history is used to determine pay at a new job, applicants, especially women, can face pay discrimination resulting in lower lifetime pay, less family income, and more children and families in poverty. This session we passed a measure, building upon last year's Equal Pay Opportunity Act, to establish the strongest-in-the-nation pay transparency protections. This new law prohibits employers from asking salary history and requires them to provide the salary range to job applicants upon request.

Banning abusive non-compete agreements

Up to 20 percent of the nation's workforce, including grocery and fast-food workers, are bound by non-compete contracts, which block them from seeking better jobs. We passed legislation to restrict this unfair and unnecessary practice such as limiting their duration, improving disclosure, exempting most franchise workers, and banning their use for jobs that pay less than \$100,000/year.

Supporting workers with disabilities

We believe no class of workers should be marginalized for any reason, including their disability status. To end the outdated and unfair practice of paying less than minimum wage to workers with disabilities, we passed a bill prohibiting state agencies from paying persons with disabilities subminimum wages.



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Capital Budget

The capital budget makes large investments in buildings and public infrastructure such as \$1.1 billion for public schools; \$155 million for affordable housing; \$463 million to help salmon and orcas; \$117 million for community behavioral health facilities, and \$927 million for public colleges and universities, including \$10 million for future expansion of **WSU Everett**.

Other projects in the 38th District include:

- **Continuing ASARCO Cleanup**, as hundreds of homes, the smelter area and the Port are still affected.
- Full renovation of **Cedar Field** in Marysville and, in Everett, upgrades at **Forest Park, Howarth Park** and **Legion Park**. These projects will add playtime for kids and families throughout our district.
- Funding for the expansion of the **Imagine Children's Museum**, as well as a **new YMCA facility** in Everett.

In response to your concerns on the impacts that inadequate mental health services and the opioid epidemic are having on our region, this budget includes funding for increased **behavioral health services** at Providence Hospital and substance use treatment beds in some of the unused space at the Denney Juvenile Justice Center.

For more information on the budgets, please visit leap.leg.wa.gov