

2024 Session Report to the 49th District

State Representative Sharon Wylie



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Dear friends & neighbors,

While this year was a short 60 day legislative session, it was still a productive one. We were able to pass legislation addressing the challenges our state is facing while also working on the supplemental budgets to improve our communities. The short session is usually focused on minor adjustments to the three State budgets: the Capital, Operating and Transportation budgets which are created every two years during the long session. This year there were several extraordinary elements to our work.

Committees: Regulated Substances & Gaming (Co-Chair) · Finance · Transportation



Capital Budget

We continue to have more needs than resources throughout the state. I am glad that our region received resources for a number of critical projects. The Capital budget builds for the future and puts people to work. It allows us to address infrastructure needs for clean water and fish habitat and to ensure the open spaces and parks will be there for future generations and much more.

Operating Budget

I am proud that our state is first in the nation to keep college and technical training affordable and accessible to as many students as possible. Continuing to offer on-line as well as other learning opportunities is a priority in our state. Part of the reason that our economy is the strongest in the nation is because of the investments we have made in education and training as well as building for green energy in our future.

Budget Highlights

- \$200K for the Vancouver Family Resource Center expansion. The Center is a key resource for providing youth behavioral health crisis support for youth and families. This funding will help them expand their facility to broaden their capacity to serve our community.
- \$200K for the Council for the Homeless Building Rehabilitation. CFTH has been a leading responder to homelessness in the community since 1989. This funding will help prepare additional office space to meet that need.
- \$1.3M for college campuses and climate recovery. This will fund the installation of utility submeters in local community and technical colleges to ensure compliance with the 2019 Clean Buildings Act.
- \$1M for the Vancouver Housing Authority energy retrofit.
- \$600K for the Columbia River Mental Health Services Clinic.
- \$500K for the State School for the Blind campus preservation.

And I-5 Bridge Update w/ Transport News

It has been over 10 years since my colleagues and I from Southwest Washington restarted the effort to replace the aging I-5 Bridge. The billion dollars in our last transportation package, along with Oregon's match, and multiple federal grants the work to replace this bridge moving forward.

We will continue to provide updates at critical points in the project. I am pleased with our efforts and feel they are a great improvement over our previous work on the matter. I am also thrilled at the increased public participation as we make sure impacted communities have all the necessary information available to them during each step of the process. The status reports will be updated as the decisions still to be made are completed. Please follow along at [Interstatebridge.org](https://interstatebridge.org) to keep informed!



Affordable Housing

Although our community has stepped up to help address the need for affordable housing better than many, the need for state action and partnership continues. Some of the ways the state acted to support affordable housing this session include

- HB 1892 – to create a Workforce Housing Accelerator Program.
- HB 1998 – paves the way for co-living housing a flexible and efficient housing model that addresses numerous pressing issues.
- HB 2321 – revisits the middle housing bill from last session and makes technical changes that clarify requirements in the bill.

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Mental/Behavioral Health Investments

We know that homelessness and crime and addiction have left no family or community untouched and like many, I am frustrated. However, while addressing these issues we cannot repeat our mistakes of the past. We are making great improvements to our facilities and providing the community-based access to good treatment programs. It took time for things to get bad and will also take time for them to be noticeably better. I am confident that as we continue to learn more about substance abuse disorder we will continue to implement legislation and fund programs that will help us get to the other side of this crisis. What we did this session includes...

- HB 1956- creates a statewide drug overdose prevention and awareness campaign in K-12 schools
- HB 2112- Requires higher learning institutions to provide fentanyl test strips, naloxone, and education, prevention, and awareness programs
- \$4.371 million in the Operating Budget for school-based prevention and intervention.



Public Safety

I was horrified to find out how meager our training resources were and how difficult it was becoming to replace retiring law enforcement personnel. But, thanks to a strong bipartisan effort, Clark County now has a new Law Enforcement Training Academy. This allows our future public safety professionals to train in their own community. There were many willing applicants and the first class is set to graduate soon. In addition to this new facility, we added mental health professionals and coordinated training and resources to assist officers with people in crisis. This makes our communities safer and more secure.



Initiatives to the Legislature

Since 1990 there have only been 21 initiatives to the legislature, and less than half (9) have received hearings. In this short 60 day session, we were asked to hear an unprecedented six initiatives. Of these six we passed three to ensure sound fiscal, policy, and legal decisions were being made around them.

- I-2081 balances preserving students' rights with establishing an accessible place in statute to inform parents of their rights, including access to specific student information.
- I-2111 codifies into state law that no state or local jurisdictions can impose an income tax.
- 2113 aims to strike a balance in police pursuits, maintaining crucial safety measures while granting local communities the autonomy to adopt pursuit policies that suit their specific needs.