

Stay in Touch



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Committees:

- Local Government, Land Use & Tribal Affairs (Chair)
- Environment, Energy & Technology (Vice-Chair)
- Transportation
- Joint Legislative Audit Review (JLARC)



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Committees:

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Appropriations
- Environment & Energy
- Rules



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Committees:

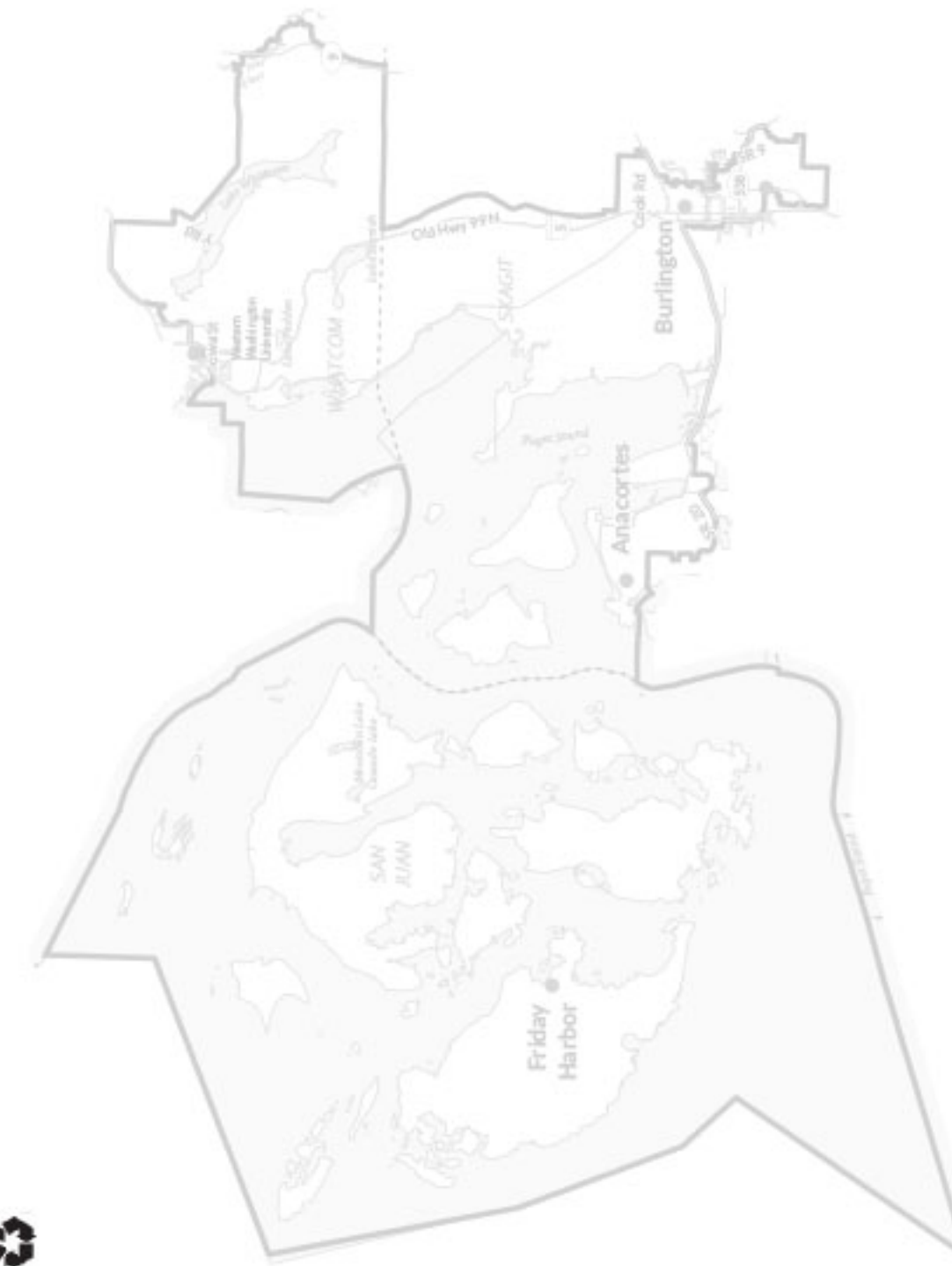
- Environment & Energy
- Finance
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Legislative Report to the 40th District

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT TO THE 40TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Neighbors,

In the 2024 session, we prioritized supporting the values of the 40th district – investing in our communities, nurturing our natural world, and bolstering our economy. With a robust legislative agenda, we passed 373 bills - 96% with bipartisan votes – highlighting the imperative for progress in addressing persistent challenges such as housing stability, childcare accessibility, and the fentanyl crisis.

We are fortunate to have an engaged electorate, and our offices responded to thousands of emails and phone calls during the fast-paced, 60-day session. This gave us a good sense of what was on folks' minds, and we responded by working across the aisle and across the rotunda on solutions to problems that will benefit us now and into the future. We heard that you care about public safety, quality infrastructure, protecting healthcare freedom, supporting kids, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities, cleaning up pollution, and bolstering the vibrant communities the 40th is known for. We work hard to earn your trust and deliver on these priorities.



While acknowledging that we always have more work to do to pass important policies to improve people's lives such as rent stabilization, we want to take this opportunity to share the legislature's 2024 achievements - and the work our team contributes - to maintaining Washington's reputation as a leader in addressing social needs, protecting the planet, and fostering economic prosperity. We hope you find it useful!

Thank You,

Liz Lovelett Debra Lekanoff Alex Ramel

Sen. Lovelett

Rep. Lekanoff

Rep. Ramel

The Ferry System

A challenge our team faces every session is to find and defend funding to benefit riders of the state ferry system. In our budget, the Legislature made significant investments in essential infrastructure and staffing through a comprehensive approach. Key priorities we secured include progress on building new vessels; maintaining and upgrading older ones; and a deep focus on workforce recruitment, retention, and training opportunities with potential advancement at Washington State Ferries.



We delivered the additional funding necessary to complete construction of the new electric ferry for Guemes Island. We also collaborated to fund essential programs that help local families - like Kids Ride Free – now extended to children under 18 on all county ferries in Washington.

We also looked for vessels to restore the Sydney BC run ahead of schedule knowing how crucial it is to our local economy. We will continue to keep this issue in front of decision makers as we find a viable solution.

Turning the Tide on Climate Change

Our delegation consistently delivers on facilitating the transition to cleaner energy and transportation options, and in the protection of our natural environment. This year, we championed policies that will spur the development of geothermal energy resources and thermal energy networks – key to expanding the foundation of a reliable energy grid.

Our budget utilizes resources from the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) to fund investments that bring us closer to our vision of a clean energy future that is available to all – creating jobs in our area with partnerships that reduce pollution and costs to consumers for solutions like electric vehicles and heat pumps. Leveraging the CCA also allows Washington to be competitive in securing federal grants, allowing us to lead on emerging technologies like green hydrogen.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited about passing policies that will reform our recycling system to reduce plastic waste and pollution. Future culvert removal will help us restore thousands of miles of habitat to improve our watersheds – a benefit to drinking water, fish, and agriculture.

A Healthier Washington

As we navigate the intricate landscape of behavioral health and substance use disorder (SUD), we're dedicated to forging a healthier, more equitable Washington. Together, we're proud to mark milestones in this journey.

In tackling the fentanyl and opioid crisis, our focus has been on safeguarding youth, behavioral healthcare workforce expansion, and accessible treatment options. Collaboration with tribal communities was central, and we integrated these tribal policies into our crisis response protocols with House Bill 1877. The budget allocated significant capital for SUD response and care facilities - expanding statewide access and stabilizing people's lives.

Legislation further ensured stable housing for individuals undergoing treatment, reducing homelessness risk. Collaborations with the American Indian Health Commission resulted in wins for Tribal communities – whose partnerships provide tremendous regional benefits, as well.

These efforts underscore Washington's dedication to health equity and tribal sovereignty, aiming to improve outcomes and foster resilience and safety in our community.



Supportive & Affordable Housing



This year, we built on successes from 2023 that are now being seen in our communities. The development of more multi-family, workforce, and supportive housing are becoming a reality with continued investments in the Housing Trust Fund and direct appropriations to projects in the district. Additional policies this year will bring our neighborhoods

co-living housing, turn disused commercial spaces into residential units, and provide opportunities for tenants to purchase mobile home parks.

But supply side investments are not enough. We were deeply disappointed that we were unable to enact modest rent stabilization protections for the 40% of Washingtonians who rent. Renters deserve the same predictable cost increases that homeowners do when balancing their household budgets. We are ready to fight for this critical policy in 2025.

Investing in our Communities



The state's capital budget includes several community investments in the 40th district. Here's a look at a few of the highlights from this year's supplemental budget, especially in the areas of community health, housing, and supportive services:

- Doubling the available beds at the Skagit County Crisis Stabilization Center and adding 32 treatment and acute detox beds in Whatcom County.
- Support for Lummi Nation's new substance abuse treatment center.
- Planning resources for a for a new intergenerational community center and expanded aquatic facilities in Bellingham.
- Matching funding to conserve 184-acres of ecologically important forest on Blakely Island.
- Small grants to support important projects including Lopez Food Center, Orcas Island Pea Patch senior housing, expansion of the Port of Skagit Granary, and sewer upgrades for the education and cultural center of the Samish Indian Nation.

Education

Education is among the paramount duties of the state. Funding parity for school districts in the 40th has been an ongoing challenge since we were negatively impacted by changing the state's levy formula in 2019. As this was a supplemental budget year, we worked on a strategy that will help augment school budgets in the short-term. Many of these investments are supported by the critical revenue generated by the capital gains tax.

Some of the critical steps we took to help our schools and students include increasing special education funding; adding more dollars for utilities, supplies, and free school meals; additional resources for paraeducators; Climate Commitment Act investments to purchase electric school busses; and reforming how we fund school construction.

This won't solve all our problems, but we hope will provide some immediate relief. We stand by as your diligent partners in continuing to work to fully fund our local school districts.

