



SENATOR
**Patty
Kuderer**



REPRESENTATIVE
**Vandana
Slatter**



REPRESENTATIVE
**Amy
Walen**

48th District Legislative Report



Dear neighbors,

After two remote legislative sessions, we met back in person for the 2023 session to address the issues that mattered most to you. We've made important strides on protecting consumers, reducing gun violence, stabilizing the sky-rocketing cost of housing, and much more.

With the legislative session drawing to a close, we passed our 2023-25 operating, capital, and transportation budgets building on the work done in previous years by making major investments to fund critical state services, help students have the tools to succeed, provide families with stable housing, and take tangible action turn the tide on climate change. Best of all, **it does not rely on any new general taxes or fees.**

We led the way on expanding access to behavioral health care, addressing the shortage of behavioral health workers with legislation to help us recruit, educate, and retain the workforce we need (**HB 1724**), as well as a provide mental health counselors with a streamlined process to practice across state lines in Washington (**HB 1069**).

But we knew there was more to be done, and we heard loud and clear from you that you wanted more progress on supporting seniors and helping working families save money. We are excited to share the passage of a dedicated property tax exemption for seniors and veterans (**HB 1355**), the expansion of the Working Families Tax Credit (**HB 1477**), and an increased COLA for public employees and teachers (**SB 5294, SB 5350**).

Having heard from you about the issues that mattered most, we moved forward important policies to advance racial equity and justice in our community to ensure all people and all communities in our state can thrive. One important bill at the intersection of equity and community development is **HB 1181** to help cities and counties plan, adapt, and build more sustainably, so they are better prepared and protected from climate change impacts and natural disasters.

We've done more work this session than can fit in a newsletter, but we've each highlighted some of the work we're most proud of in the following pages. While we're proud of the work we were able to accomplish, there's always more to do. Now, we are back in the community, listening to you, and working hard on your behalf to address the most pressing challenges. You can also learn more about our work by visiting our websites and getting in contact with us.

Thank You,

Sen. Patty Kuderer

Rep. Vandana Slatter

Rep. Amy Walen



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SENATOR PATTY KUDERER'S LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your state senator – it is a responsibility I take very seriously. I am thrilled to report on the extraordinary legislative session we had this year! In true bipartisan fashion, we passed a wide array of legislation, ranging from robust housing policies and bolstering public safety to safeguarding our environment. And while I am proud of all we accomplished; it is clear we still have more work to do.

ADDRESSING OUR STATE'S HOUSING CRISIS

As chair of the Senate Housing Committee, I can tell you that this was certainly the year of housing in Washington. We allocated over \$1.2 billion in housing investments over the next two years to prioritize the transition of unsheltered people into permanent housing, coupled with essential supportive behavioral health services. We passed the “missing middle” bill (**HB 1110**) to increase housing supply and **HB 1337** and **SB 5045** to facilitate the building of attached and detached accessory dwelling units. Additionally, we streamlined the permitting process (**SB 5290**) to accelerate renovating unused or underused buildings into residential spaces as outlined in **HB 1042**. We are the first state in our nation to pass legislation to increase homeownership opportunities for low-income families and communities impacted by the legacy of now illegal racist restrictive covenants (**HB 1474**). Lastly, we passed a targeted property tax exemption (**HB 1355**) to help our disabled veterans and seniors remain in their homes. Collectively, these legislative victories underscore our comprehensive approach to tackling the housing crisis and our commitment to ensuring housing opportunities for all Washingtonians.



DRUG POSSESSION CRISIS

There were many reasons to feel proud when the session ended in April, except for one significant issue – we still needed to fix Washington’s drug possession law. We passed a compromise version of **SB 5536** with strong bipartisan support to address our drug possession laws. Those who have known someone with a substance abuse issue know there is no linear path out of addiction. Although this bill is not perfect, and additional tweaks may be needed, for now, it brings accountability combined with significant reforms and funding to support people struggling with substance use disorder and who are caught with a small amount of drugs on their person. The measures for support include expanded treatment programs and diversion options to help people heal from addiction. This legislation demonstrates our commitment to accountability, reform, and support for individuals battling substance use disorder and paves the way for a brighter and more compassionate future for our communities.

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

In the first half of 2023 alone, there have already been over 330 mass shootings in the US. I have said it many times, and I’ll say it again: enough is enough! As our nation grapples with ongoing gun violence, our state Legislature took further action this session to keep Washingtonians safe. After years of effort, this session we passed **HB 1240** to prohibit the manufacture, importation, distribution, and sale of any assault weapon (like AR-15s). We also passed two other major gun safety bills – **HB 1143** institutes a 10-day waiting period for all firearm purchases and requires comprehensive safety training, and **SB 5078** mandates gun manufacturers and dealers to implement reasonable controls to prevent dangerous individuals from accessing firearms.

The measures we have taken this session to address gun violence are significant, but our work is far from over. I will continue to advocate for effective gun safety measures, ensuring our schools, neighborhoods, and public spaces are safer.



I am pleased to share my legislative priorities from this past session. These include addressing workforce shortages, ensuring access to post-secondary credential attainment, protecting reproductive health care, and building resiliency to reduce the impact of climate change in our communities.

THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

As Chair of the Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Development Committee, I am proud of the bipartisan progress we've made to help more students access and attain a post-secondary credential, including apprenticeships. A resilient, equitable and stable economy hinges on building a workforce that uplifts all communities.

A bill I was proud to sponsor, **HB 1176**, establishes the Washington Climate Corps Network to grow opportunities in clean energy jobs, especially for young adults, veterans, and communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. We've also reduced workforce shortages and made higher education and vocational training more attainable by streamlining licensing requirements for military spouses (**HB 1009**), behavioral health care professionals (**HB 1724, HB 1503**), nurses, dental hygienists (**HB 1287**), forensic pathologists (**SB 5523**), and apprentices (**HB 1050**). Additionally, the workforce pipeline has been improved by creating more educational opportunities with college in the high school programs (**SB 5048**), expanding applied doctoral degrees to regional universities (**HB 1030**), increasing financial aid opportunities for students (**HB 1289, HB 1763, HB 1823, SB 5702**), and providing childcare for those in apprenticeship training (**HB 1525**).

THE STATE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling to overturn Roe vs Wade undermined the right to privacy and ended 50 years of the constitutional right to an abortion. Washington State stepped up to strengthen protections for those seeking reproductive care and health data privacy. I was proud to pass into law **House Bill 1155**, the Washington My Health, My Data Act. This first in the nation law protects the privacy of our healthcare decisions. It addresses vulnerabilities in the technological era that are being used to target and exploit consumers who may not be aware of the vast amount of data from apps such as menstrual-tracking apps, searches, healthcare location data, and websites that our watches and phones collect.

We also passed a landmark Shield Law to protect patients from other states seeking care and healthcare professionals providing reproductive care (**HB 1469**), allowed the state to distribute mifepristone (**HB 1854**), and eliminated co-pays and deductible requirements for abortion care (**SB 5242**). In this year's operating budget, funding has been secured for emergency contraception vending machines at community colleges and universities, with an additional \$24 million provided for reproductive health services. Looking ahead, we must remain vigilant in responding to attacks on the fundamental right to bodily autonomy.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY & OUR ENVIRONMENT

If not urgently addressed, climate change will continue to destroy fragile eco-systems globally and cause significant damage to our way of life in the Pacific Northwest. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved resiliency against the impacts of climate change (**HB 1170, HB 1329**) provide a future of continued economic stability and preserve the natural beauty of our state. Electrifying the state (**SB 5165**), reducing greenhouse gas emissions by decarbonizing state energy systems (**HB 1390**), keeping our environment and communities safe from toxic cosmetics (**HB 1047**), and providing safe battery recycling programs (**SB 5144**) are several key pieces of environmental legislation passed this year.



REP. AMY WALEN'S LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Going into this legislative session, I had three main priorities: help Washingtonians and their businesses rebound successfully from the pandemic, improve access to housing and behavioral health care, and to provide tax relief to those who need it most. I am glad that we made significant progress on all these issues, but much work remains. Here are some of the highlights of legislation that was enacted.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Washington needs to remain vigilant in protecting consumers. Scammers are active in our communities, taking advantage of our most vulnerable neighbors. In 2023, we passed legislation to hold robocall criminals accountable (**HB 1051**), cracked down on real estate schemes harming seniors (**SB 5399, SB 5191**), established standards for pet insurance (**SB 5319**), put limits to the use of predatory loans by pet stores to ensure that they are operating in both the animal and consumer's best interest (**HB 1424**), and strengthened protections in the Consumer Protection Act. While doing so, we also created a fair and welcoming business environment to keep our economy functioning as best in the nation. Notably, this session saw the development of best practices for professional licensing to get people to work AND keep our consumers safe. All this work was done with an equity focus and a critical eye on protecting our most vulnerable residents. As chair of the Consumer Protection & Business Committee, I believe we can and must adapt our laws to address the challenges of AI and other emerging technologies to keep Washingtonians safe.

EMPOWERING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



In Washington, 20% of all murders are domestic violence offenses. Nearly 60% of intimate partner violence related homicides include firearms. This year, we funded over \$62 million in programs that will expand domestic violence services for survivors. We worked for almost four years to pass legislation (**HB 1562**) to close loopholes in the process by which abusers can regain access to firearms.

Empowering survivors entails more than just protecting victims. It requires building a system with services and “flipping the script”, so that abusers are removed from the home, rather than survivors seeking shelter. Domestic violence is a highly predictable and preventable crime. With **House Bill 1715**, we strengthened the protection order process, required surrender of firearms, provided access to lethality assessments for domestic violence perpetrators and increased access to counsel for low-income survivors.

TAX REFORM & ADDRESSING INEQUITY

This session, we made historic investments in communities experiencing the effects of housing discrimination. My bill, **House Bill 1046** - the first bill to be voted off the House floor - provides Housing Authorities greater ability to partner with private developers to build housing for working families. Another bill of mine (**HB 1042**) allows the repurposing of commercial buildings to rapidly house people.



The expansion of the Working Families Tax Credit (**HB 1477**) will create opportunities for multi-generational economic security for all Washingtonians. I was proud to partner with our Senator in the work to make our ballots more informative and meaningful by encouraging voter participation (**HB 1158/SB 5082**). I plan to continue advocating for unemployment benefits for undocumented people (**HB 1095**), some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

THE WORK AHEAD

Despite solid progress in numerous areas, important work remains. Some of the issues I look forward to championing include mandatory clergy/child abuse reporting (**HB 1098**), improved income reporting for child support (**HB 1262**), animal welfare (**HB 1034, HB 1153**), a tax on ammunition to fund behavioral health services, more affordable housing in our district, and a mechanism to freeze property taxes at the time of retirement so seniors can stay in their homes. I look forward to your collaboration and feedback as we head into the next legislative session!

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The 2023-25 state budgets prepare Washington for continued prosperity with record investments in housing, schools, behavioral health facilities, early learning and projects that protect the natural beauty of our state for future generations. Here is a look at some of the investments included in the budget that will make Washington a better home for all.

OPERATING BUDGET

Our two-year operating budget adds roughly \$4.7 billion in new spending, leaves \$3 billion in total reserves, and does not rely on any new general taxes or fees. Additionally, the budget maintains services that were expanded during the pandemic with federal funds to protect vulnerable Washingtonians. Our new budget investments reflect the needs we see in our communities and across the state. Washingtonians want strong schools, safe communities, affordable housing, climate action, and an innovative economy and this spending plan will improve lives and move our state forward.

Our operating budget includes:

- \$2.9 billion in total new spending for K-12 education, the largest investment since the McCleary court decision - including \$417 million for special education.
- \$91 million to create more slots for children eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.
- \$1.2 billion in state and federal funds will go to respond to the state's behavioral health challenges, implementing the Legislature's Blake bill, adding new treatment facilities, more community-based housing, and new programs to support people with developmental disabilities and chronic mental illness.
- \$140 million from opioid settlement agreements will support treatment for substance use disorder.
- \$16 million to protect access to reproductive care and to support community clinics seeing sharp increases of out-of-state patients.
- \$519 million will go toward housing and the immediate shelter needs of people experiencing homelessness across our state.
- \$95 million for food assistance benefits and \$44 million for an eight percent increase to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), the Aged, Blind, or Disabled program (ABD), and other cash assistance programs.
- \$81 million for refugee support and education.
- \$400 million from the Climate Commitment Act for projects to reduce carbon emissions and increase community resiliency.
- \$382 million funding community and technical colleges, health care workforce development and training, dual credit programs, graduate student loan programs, and meeting the basic needs of post-secondary students.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Our \$13.4 billion transportation budget invests in traffic safety, expands the state patrol and ferry workforces, funds green transportation options, and keeps work on schedule for transportation projects big and small across Washington.

With traffic fatalities in Washington at a 30-year high, a renewed emphasis on safety was a goal of the 2023 legislative session. Safety investments in this budget include:

- increasing safe routes to school
- mapping sidewalk gaps
- improving busy intersections
- introducing grade separation on rural roads to prevent serious crashes from lane departures
- directing the Traffic Safety Commission to study and respond to alarming safety trends

A focus on Washington's ferry system is also at the core of this budget. That includes procurement of new ferries — including hybrid-electric vessels, as well as addressing workforce shortages by empowering more diverse communities to seek out those careers. There are also approximately \$969.8 million worth of investments in green projects in this budget from the recent Climate Commitment Act auctions. Those projects include increasing safe routes to schools, e-bike and school-based bike programs, ferry electrification, the conversion of medium and heavy commercial vehicles and port electrification as well as ultra-high-speed rail. This budget also ensures that large transportation projects already underway continue to progress.

48th DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

This year, we invested \$8.9 billion for the construction of critical infrastructure across our state. We leveraged federal dollars to make additional investments in priority areas we heard about from you to support the growth and development of our communities, address various challenges that have been identified, and end with a balanced budget.

Here are just a few of the projects we secured funding for across the 48th:

- \$1,000,000 for the Building of the Arts Program
- \$243,000 for Community Home renovations
- \$1,288,000 for the Kirkland Performance Center
- \$258,000 for the Tasveer Art Center
- \$6,000,000 for the Meydenbauer Center
- \$3,500,000 for environmental clean-up of the Tiki Carwash Superfund site

