



44th DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

REP. APRIL BERG

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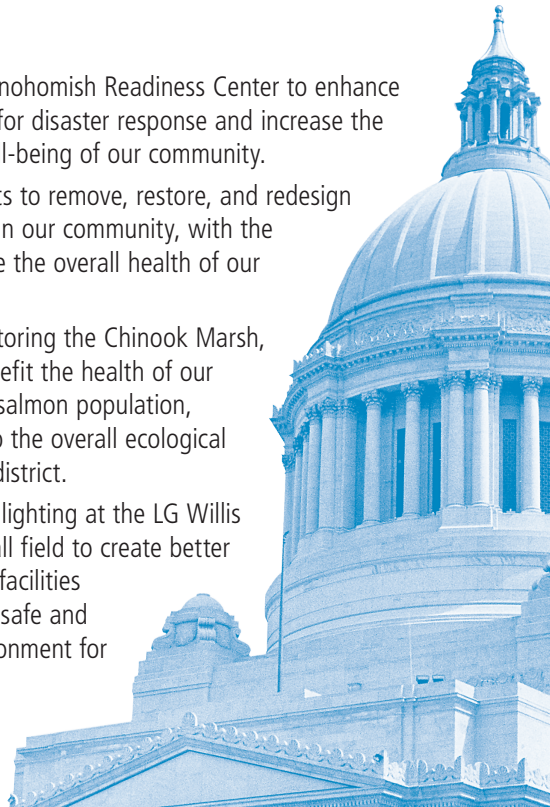
44th DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REVIEW 2023

FUNDING LOCAL PROJECTS

I am delighted to share with you many meaningful, community-oriented local projects in our 44th District community, which are funded in the capital budget. These projects will not only benefit our local communities but also contribute to the overall economic development of our region.

- Renovating Mill Creek City Hall North to better serve the needs of our community, providing more efficient services, and increasing accessibility.
- Creating a multi-use recreational area for Mill Creek to promote healthy and active lifestyles while providing more opportunities for community engagement.
- Establishing a new Teen Center in the Boys & Girls Club in Snohomish, providing a safe space for our youth to socialize and learn.
- Creating a new campus for public safety and city services in Snohomish to improve response times and provide more efficient services.
- Helping our communities prepare for and respond to disasters by implementing floodplain solutions.

- Creating the Snohomish Readiness Center to enhance our readiness for disaster response and increase the safety and well-being of our community.
- Several projects to remove, restore, and redesign fish passages in our community, with the aim to improve the overall health of our ecosystems.
- Phase 1 in restoring the Chinook Marsh, which will benefit the health of our estuaries and salmon population, contributing to the overall ecological health of our district.
- Improving the lighting at the LG Willis Tucker Park ball field to create better youth athletic facilities and provide a safe and inclusive environment for our children.



44th DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REVIEW 2023



REPRESENTATIVE
APRIL BERG
44th Legislative District



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After two historic remote sessions, 2023 saw the Legislature return to in-person proceedings in Olympia. We championed many meaningful policies that will undoubtedly have a positive impact at your kitchen table and I'm excited to share some key accomplishments!

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.**

Washington led the way in upholding the fundamental rights of privacy and bodily autonomy by passing a robust package of bills related to reproductive and gender-affirming care. We also contended with community safety, passing bills that represent a significant effort toward preventing the devastating impacts of gun violence. Additionally, we passed legislation to ensure police can pursue dangerous suspects where warranted and allowed.

The Legislature also focused on education and addressing workforce shortages—in behavioral health and nursing, the trades and long-term care, computer science and green economy needs—including by increasing access to high-quality and affordable child care.

We did more work this session than can fit in a newsletter, but I've highlighted some of the work I'm most proud of in the following pages. You can also learn more by visiting my website or getting in contact with me. Thank you for being such engaged constituents. It is an honor to represent you!

Rep. April Berg

44th Legislative District Representative **APRIL BERG**

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Check out my video series, Berg Bill Basics, on my official Facebook page to learn more about the legislative process and how to get involved in your government!

INCREASING HOUSING



Washington is projected to need 1.1 million new homes – of every kind and in every community—over the next decade. Already, seniors can’t find places to downsize, teachers and young families can’t afford homes, and people with low incomes are struggling to stay housed at all. It’s no wonder then that my colleagues and I made housing our top legislative priority this session.

Our focus was specifically on allowing more diverse housing options to increase supply, streamlining the regulatory process to make it easier for developers to build, and supporting those unable to afford housing. We did just that, successfully passing bills requiring cities to allow for more diverse housing options in residential neighborhoods, easing barriers to accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and helping to rapidly convert unused or underused existing buildings into new housing. Several bills were also passed to support housing stabilization: establishing a covenant homeownership account, creating a program allowing cities to use surplus public lands to develop deeply affordable housing, and protecting renters from unfair deposit claims. Finally, the state made a historic \$500 million investment in the Housing Trust Fund to help build more affordable housing.

ADDRESSING THE BLAKE DECISION



As many of you know, the Washington State Supreme Court’s ruling in State v. Blake overturned the state’s felony drug possession law, creating a gap in policy that was set to expire on July 1. With the expiration approaching, several cities and counties had announced their intent to pass their own ordinances, potentially leading to a confusing patchwork of policies, treatment options, and penalties. Recognizing the need for clarity and stability in our communities, the Legislature passed a new drug possession law during a special session held in May. We deliberated on various approaches to ensure that individuals struggling with substance use disorders receive the necessary support and services, while also addressing the public safety concerns associated with drug possession.

The new law (**SB 5536**) ramps up recovery support that is proven to work, builds out low-barrier access to treatment, and provides avenues for accountability with plenty of offramps to treatment. To limit the exposure to the criminal justice system for those suffering from substance use disorder, the law caps incarceration time to 6 months for the first two offenses and financial penalties to \$1,000. It also keeps local jurisdictions from penalizing drug paraphernalia, something they can currently do today.

Substance use disorder is a public health problem and deserves a public health response. Together, we can bring consistency and healing to every corner of our state.

LEADING THE FIGHT ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

WA HOUSE DEMOCRATS

HB 1155 PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH CARE DATA

PROTECTING & PRESERVING

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Washington has long led the way on reproductive freedom. People should be free to make the family planning decisions that are best for them, and we are committed to protecting these long-existing rights for Washingtonians and those seeking care from other states.

One of the most critical pieces of legislation passed this session is the My Health, My Data Act (**HB 1155**), which ensures that our deeply personal health information, including reproductive health data, cannot be sold without our consent. We also passed a bill that protects healthcare providers from disciplinary action for providing legal care in our state (**HB 1340**).

To further protect reproductive care, we passed the Shield Law (**HB 1469**), which provides legal protection for those who pursue or provide reproductive care in Washington. With this law, we’re making it clear that we won’t stand idly by while extremist lawmakers in other states try to restrict reproductive care. We’re committed to ensuring that everyone in our state has access to safe, legal, and affordable reproductive healthcare.

We also eliminated co-pays and deductible requirements for abortion care, so that no one’s ability to access reproductive healthcare is impacted by their ability to pay. Finally, we passed a bill that allows Washington to distribute mifepristone (**HB 1854**), which is used to end a pregnancy or for miscarriage management.

These are just a few examples of the work we’re doing to protect reproductive rights and gender-affirming care in Washington state. We’re committed to fighting for these fundamental rights and ensuring that everyone in our state has access to the healthcare they need. Thank you for your support and for standing with us in this important fight!

BUILDING A BETTER TAX STRUCTURE FOR WASHINGTON



As Chair of the House Finance Committee, I’ve been working alongside my colleagues on building a more equitable, stable, transparent, and just tax structure for the state. Historically, voices of overburdened communities have been excluded from the legislative process and financial structures. It’s our job to connect with these communities, amplify these voices, and prioritize policy and funding to address their needs, to build a healthier, happier, safer future for all in Washington.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

It is unacceptable for veterans, seniors, or people with disabilities pushed out of their homes—and inflation is having a devastating impact on vulnerable communities across our state. A new law (**HB 1355**) provides property tax relief, expanding eligibility for veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities by increasing the calculation of income tax thresholds. It accounts for the differences in property values and incomes and adjusts for inflation, protecting people from losing their benefits because of this year’s social security COLA.

PRIORITIZING WORKING FAMILIES



Many working families in Washington are on the brink of catastrophe—far too many working people are just one missed paycheck or unexpected bill away from incredible economic hardship. To help address this, in 2021 the Legislature enacted the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). With it, individuals and families can receive rebates up to \$1,200, and it is estimated to help over 400,000 Washingtonians this year. This session, we passed legislation to modify the WFTC (**HB 1477**), expanding assistance to more individuals in need. By putting money back in the pockets of working families, we are stimulating local economies, promoting racial equity, and providing the financial stability Washington families need right now.

DO YOU QUALIFY? Check at workingfamiliescredit.wa.gov.

LEGISLATIVE WINS

WATER SAFETY



Drowning is the leading cause of death for children aged one to four and has devastating effects on families and communities. In addition, it disproportionately affects communities of color, with 45% of Hispanic children and 64% of African American children

having limited or no ability to swim.

Water safety is a pressing danger for children in the state of Washington—and it is also a preventable tragedy. Yet so many children are losing their lives due to a lack of access to education and resources. That’s why I’m so proud to have successfully passed Yori’s Law (**HB 1750**). The new law, inspired by Chezik Tsunoda, a mother who tragically lost her three-year-old son to drowning in 2018, promotes water safety and drowning prevention education. Its passage is a critical step towards closing the equity gap and giving all children, regardless of race or socio-economic status, the tools they need to stay safe in and around water.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND PUPPIES



Across the country, puppy-breeding farms practice high-volume dog breeding to churn out puppies for profit in cruel, abusive, inhumane environments. Puppies from mills are often sick, unsocialized, and have physical problems, and their mothers often spend their lives in cages. The puppies are then shipped all over the country to be sold in stores, offering predatory financing practices leaving many thousands of dollars in debt.

This is obviously inhumane to the puppy and exploitative to the consumer—and this session we took a stand against these practices by passing my consumer protection and animal welfare bill, **House Bill 1424**. The new law will help end the puppy mill to pet store pipeline and limit pet stores from offering predatory financing.

PLANT-BASED MEALS

In Washington, one in six kids live in a household that faces challenges in putting enough food in the table, and many students rely on public school cafeterias as their only guaranteed source of food. Providing a diversity of healthy meals in schools allows students to practice personal choice and provides students with the opportunity to experience a variety of nutritious foods, including those from plant sources, from an early age.

That’s why I’m excited to share that I successfully advocated for a \$150,000 budget proviso for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer grants to school districts for plant-based school meals pilot programs. These funds will allow schools to supplement their supply chain options, have a positive environmental impact, create partnerships with local farms, and provide more culturally inclusive diet opportunities.