



KEITH WAGONER

Washington State Senator - Republican Whip

39th Legislative District • Serving Parts of Skagit and Snohomish Counties.

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REVIEW

39TH DISTRICT

Stay in touch!

Committees

- Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks
- Law & Justice
- Ways & Means

Email:

Keith.Wagoner@leg.wa.gov

Phone:

360-786-7676

Address:

112 Legislative Modular Bldg.
PO Box 40439
Olympia, WA 98504

Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

Website:

www.SenatorKeithWagoner.com



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2024 legislative session, which ended on March 7, was one of better sessions for Washington taxpayers, with no major broad-based taxes increase, a truly supplemental budget, and a bipartisan capital budget that invests in our communities. We also saw the historic adoption of three initiatives to the Legislative from the people of Washington.

As a member of the minority leadership in the Senate, it was my honor to work for good policies that help Washington families, small businesses, our district and the state as a whole.

With that said, there were still plenty of bad policies pushed by the majority – especially in the areas of increasing our energy costs, continuing the destructive cap-and-tax program, and failing to take steps to ensure election integrity by protecting signature gathers.

I am also frustrated that lawmakers did not do more to support fishermen, hunters, farmers and ranchers. And the majority continued its disturbing assault on our Second Amendment rights, with one new measure putting local, federally-licensed firearms dealers at risk of losing their business.

Overall though, this was a busy and productive year for my office. I sponsored a number of bills, a few of which made it through the process and became law this session. I worked hard to build relationships with my colleagues across the aisle, and many of the wins we were able to see this year were examples of how bipartisanship can produce good policy.

While this year's 60-day session is over, please remember that I represent you year-round. Do not hesitate to reach out to my office with your questions and concerns.

It is an honor to serve the people of the 39th legislative district.

Sincerely,

Sen. Keith Wagoner



Victory! Leading the effort to kill a property tax hike

Senate Democrats' controversial bill allowing local governments in Washington to exceed the 1% cap on annual property tax increases died for the session thanks, in part, to the work of Senate Republicans and pressure from taxpayers and renters across the state.

The legislation sought to repeal the voter-backed limit and give cities and counties the ability to levy hikes up to 3%. But it ran into fierce opposition from Republicans and residents across the state who warned the measure would drive up living and housing costs.

Along with fellow Senate Republicans and members of the public, I held a press conference to alert the public to the impact of the legislation, including potentially keeping seniors from being able to age-in-place and raising already sky-high, historic rents.

I also introduced two measures that would have negated any need to increase property taxes while still providing additional resources for those local communities that do need funds to account for inflation and increases in caseloads.

Senate Bill 5568 would have restored liquor sales revenue distributions to local governments. Under the bill, **10 percent** would go to the counties of the state, and **40 percent** to the incorporated cities and towns of the state.



Senate Bill 5404 would **double** cannabis revenue distributions to local governments. When recreational cannabis was legalized by a vote of the people, citizens believed the revenue would be fairly shared

in their communities. They were misled; counties receive a paltry 1.5% while municipalities receive only 3%. This bill would have dedicated **three** percent of cannabis revenue to counties, cities, and towns where licensed cannabis retailers are physically located; **seven percent** to counties, cities, and towns on a per capita basis. Under the bill, counties must receive 60 percent of the distribution based on each county's total proportional population.

The combination of public outrage, and a viable alternative, left the majority with no option but to end consideration of the property tax hike.

There's a saying that sometimes elected officials have to feel the heat before they can see the light. That was definitely the case here. The public pressure helped kill the bill just hours before it was scheduled to come to the floor for Senate approval.

While I'm glad they had second thoughts this session, I don't believe they've given up. We could see this proposal again next year, so I promise you I will stay vigilant as well.

LISTENING TO THE PEOPLE: Legislature passes three of six initiatives.



Fed up with the destructive and burdensome policies passed by the Democrat majority in the Washington State Legislature, citizens collected more than 2.3 million signatures to put six initiatives before the Legislature. All six received more than 400,000 signatures each and were certified by the Washington State Secretary of State in January and February of 2024.

Initially, Democrats, who control the House and Senate, refused to hold hearings on any of the people's measures – despite the constitution making it clear that (outside of the budget)

considering initiatives to the legislature should be the top priority.

After Republicans, reasonable Democrats and citizens of all stripes rallied, spoke out and demanded some action, the majority relented and agreed to hold a hearing and vote on three of the six measures.

By strong, bipartisan votes, the Legislature passed all three.

Here's a quick review of the initiatives passed, which will take effect June 6:

- **I-2113** gives officers the ability to pursue suspected criminals once again. This is a big win for our law enforcement as it restores tools needed to keep our neighborhoods safe.
- **I-2081**, a "Parents' Bill of Rights," reaffirms that parents are the primary stakeholders in their children's upbringing. It does not change the actions schools or healthcare providers can take, but simply requires parents or legal guardians to be kept informed about such actions. It promotes transparency.
- **I-2111** puts into law a ban on state and local personal income taxes in Washington. This aligns us with what the people of Washington have expressed many times. It also benefits our economy by making our state more attractive to businesses.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, the majority party refused to even schedule public hearings on the remaining three initiatives. As a result, they will now be on the November ballot for Washington voters to consider.



"Supporters of the no-pursuit law say it was passed in the name of "safety." Some supporters still say that there is no data saying the law is unsafe, so we do not need to restore the ability of police to help catch dangerous criminals. When they say that, they are ignoring Immaculee and Kathleen, the two children who were recently killed in Sunnyside by a driver who could have been stopped, and every other person killed or injured because the police weren't allowed to stop a criminal. They are saying those people don't even count as data. Opponents of restoring police pursuit are ignoring everything that doesn't support what they want.

"The truth is that there is data, but it shows that the no-pursuit law has made Washington less safe. The data they used to pass this law have been debunked but the law still hasn't been changed. I wish people would just look beyond party lines to see and hear us as people. I know it takes bravery, but that's how you keep people safe."

Amber Goldade

Mother of
Immaculee Goldade

CAPITAL BUDGET

\$4.525 million allocated to Skagit Behavioral Health Center in supplemental capital budget

The Legislature unanimously passed the supplemental capital budget on the final day of the session. Although it is only a supplemental spending plan, it includes infrastructure projects and improvements throughout communities in our region and state.

One of the highlights of the new update to the state construction plan is that I was able to work with budget writers to make sure a key need for our community is being met: completion of phase II of the Skagit County Stabilization Center.

Last year, I was able to procure \$12.7 million in the capital budget for this purpose, but inflation and other factors have increased the cost of the project, and more was needed to complete construction.

Evergreen Health in Monroe was unable to use a \$4.275 million allotment from the 2022 supplemental budget, which was intended for a behavioral-health wing. They canceled the project due to similar cost increases.

I was able to successfully argue to budget writers that it makes sense to reallocate those funds to complete the Skagit Behavioral Health Center. After all, without those funds, we would end up with two failed behavioral health projects in the North Sound District, and a critical need for our region would be left unmet.

The capital budget, as approved, includes the \$4.275 million, plus an additional \$250K of new bond money.

As we deal with a host of issues from public safety to homelessness to drug abuse, completion of this facility will go a long way toward creating a comprehensive, integrated system of behavioral health services across the northern Puget Sound region.

Capital budget update includes resources for other 39th District projects



Additionally, I am happy to report that the 39th District has seen some of the tax dollars (\$1.65 million) that you send to Olympia come back as support for key community projects, including:

- \$353,000 for Carpenter and English creek fish passage barrier improvement;
- \$300,000 for Skagit public utility districts (PUD) work on the Olsen Creek waterline relocation;
- \$257,000 for the replacement of three fish passage barrier culverts on a tributary to the Pilchuck River;
- \$250,000 for Carpenter Creek at Cascade Ridge design;
- \$103,000 for the Granite Falls Boys & Girls Club;
- \$103,000 for the Municipal Services Campus design and infrastructure in Lake Stevens;
- \$29,000 for Conway Elementary School in Mount Vernon through the small district and tribal compact schools modernization program.



NATURAL GAS BAN SELLS OUT WASHINGTON FAMILIES

House Bill 1589, signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee, allows Washington's largest utility to meet arbitrary state emissions requirements by **more than doubling consumer gas prices**, discouraging gas usage, and **ultimately shutting off gas service** one community at a time.



Homeowners and businesses would bear the cost of converting from gas to electricity. The Building Industry Association of Washington estimates costs to residential customers to average \$39,767. The impact on business also would be enormous, and energy costs would soar.

HB 1589 reverses the concept behind state utility regulation. Until now, the idea has been to promote efficiency while protecting customers from excessive costs. This bill imposes enormous costs on customers in the name of protecting one company from the financial consequences of bad energy policy.



BIPARTISAN EFFORT LEADS TO PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

The session was not without its successes despite some of the disappointments and concerning legislation passed this year. Both sides of the aisle do work well with each other in many instances.

This year, I had three of my bills make it through the Senate and House and to the Governor's desk:

- **Senate Bill 6084** - Providing collector vehicles the ability to tow trailers. This bill passed both chambers with unanimous support. It allows a collector vehicle to tow a trailer if the trailer is being used for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, and parades.
- **SB 6164** - Concerning county emergency management plans. This measure requires a local organization that produces a local comprehensive emergency management plan to include in the communication plan a notification of citizens at risk during a hazardous materials spill or release. The plans must include at least one public meeting to inform the public about the hazardous material spill or release. The comprehensive emergency management plan must also provide a functional description of how warnings and emergency information will be addressed.
- **SB 6222** - Concerning the number of district court judges. This legislation authorizes County Legislative Authorities to increase the number of District Court Judges, and the state Legislature's role in changing the number of district court judges is removed.





Senator
KEITH WAGONER

PO Box 40439
Olympia, WA 98504-0439

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 1884

**2024
LEGISLATIVE
SESSION
REVIEW**

**39TH
DISTRICT**



LD39

Senator
KEITH WAGONER

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REVIEW

