



# 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REVIEW

## REPRESENTING WASHINGTON'S 35TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2026 legislative session was one of the most challenging in recent memory. While we are proud to be your voice in Olympia, we must be candid. The Democrat majority continued to take our state in the wrong direction.

This session saw the passage of a new state income tax (deceptively marketed as a "millionaires' tax"). This is an unconstitutional and highly unpopular shift in our tax structure, which we fought tooth and nail to prevent.

We also faced an irresponsible supplemental operating budget that continues a trend of unsustainable spending and even raids our police and firefighter pensions.

Furthermore, we saw a number of measures aimed at taxing us more, undermining our constitutional rights, and supporting criminals over law-abiding citizens.

Despite these attacks, our determination to deliver for the 35th District is stronger than ever. We secured key investments in roads, infrastructure, and community projects across Thurston, Mason, and Kitsap counties. We also passed laws to help lower costs, make government more efficient, and hold criminals accountable. And through coordinated efforts, we stopped several dangerous proposals that would have made life more expensive and less safe. While these wins matter, there is still more work to do to get Washington back on the right track.

We've had enough of policies that make your life more expensive and your community less safe. We're working to stop the damage and turn things around, but the challenges facing our state are far from over.

Sincerely,

  
Sen. Drew MacEwen  
Rep. Dan Griffey  
Rep. Travis Couture

Leave a message for your lawmakers on the  
Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

## DEMOCRATS' BUDGET: HIGHER COSTS, HIGHER TAXES, NO RELIEF



This year, the majority pushed through the largest state budget in history — just over \$80 billion. It spends more than it brings in, even with record tax collections, and it comes just one year after the largest tax increase in state history. Democrats' reckless spending has more than doubled the state budget over the past decade, while most of our paychecks haven't grown anywhere near that much. Families are tightening their belts while Olympia keeps spending like there's no limit.

And what are we getting for it? Schools aren't improving. Housing is still out of reach. Homelessness is worse. The drug crisis is hitting harder than ever. For all the money going out the door, life isn't getting easier where we live.

Instead of fixing that, this budget leans on shaky math — including a legally questionable \$4 billion raid on a pension fund for retired police officers and firefighters. And instead of cutting waste, they cut the things people actually rely on: a combined \$1 billion from Medicaid over the last two budgets, \$250 million from K-12 schools — cuts that hit rural districts like ours the hardest — and over \$150 million in cuts to child care and nursing homes.

Republicans offered a solution: a no new taxes budget that balanced, cut nearly \$4 billion in waste, and protected essential services like schools, health care, and public safety. But Democrats chose to continue their reckless spending addiction, and you're picking up the tab.

If \$80 billion can't fix the basics, the problem isn't a lack of money — it's how it's being spent.



## STATE INCOME TAX

Democrats in Olympia passed an unconstitutional income tax and slapped a "millionaires only" label on it, hoping you wouldn't look too close. But we've seen this before. Once the system is in place, they can lower that threshold anytime they want.

This hits the people who keep our communities running: small business owners, family farms, and contractors. Folks who took risks, worked long hours, and built something from the ground up. Instead of backing them, Olympia is targeting them.

This tax punishes the very people our local economy depends on.

In a rural district like ours, that matters. When local employers get squeezed, jobs disappear, growth slows, and families feel it. This is not happening somewhere else. It lands right here at home.

And the real slap in the face? Democrats blocked your right to vote on it through a referendum. They knew this tax would not survive a ballot, so they took that choice away from you and pushed it through anyway.

That should concern every one of us.

If they can pass a tax like this and shut the public out, they can do it again. Today, it's labeled for someone else. Tomorrow, it can be expanded to reach deeper into the middle class and hit families who are already stretched thin.

They want more of your money, and they don't want your say.

**"Washington's constitution is clear, and the courts have been equally clear for nearly a century — income is property, and progressive income taxes are unconstitutional under existing law. If the State proceeds with the new income tax, it will create a direct conflict with binding precedent and the constitutional protections that safeguard taxpayers." - March 30, 2026**

**FMR. WA ATTORNEY GENERAL  
ROB MCKENNA**

## TAKING POWER FROM THE PEOPLE

This session, the majority passed a series of bills that shift power away from the people and into state government. These changes may sound technical, but they directly affect your rights, your local representation, and how much control you have over decisions in your own community.

### **Weaponizing the Attorney General (SB 5925 / HB 2156)**

Senate Bill 5925 and House Bill 2156, which were both signed into law by the governor, grant the Attorney General sweeping new investigative powers that are unprecedented in Washington. These laws allow the Attorney General to demand records and compel sworn testimony before even filing a case, without a warrant or a judge's approval. That creates real concern that a partisan statewide office could use these tools to target individuals or businesses, including political opponents, with limited oversight. The law also allows for gag orders that can prevent those being investigated from speaking publicly about it, raising serious concerns about free speech and due process. For many, the burden alone (legal costs, time, and uncertainty) can be overwhelming.

### **The "Anti-Sheriff" Bill (SB 5974)**

Senate Bill 5974 changes who your sheriff answers to. It gives a state commission — appointed mostly by the governor — the power to investigate, decertify, and remove your elected sheriff. That means if they don't like your sheriff, they can remove your sheriff — even if voters don't agree. It also limits who can even run for sheriff in the first place, narrowing your choices before you ever cast a vote. Sheriffs are supposed to answer to the people who elect them. If something goes wrong, voters already have the power to vote them out or recall them. This new law takes that power out of your hands and gives it to the state.

### **Majority Ignores Will of the People, No Action on Initiatives**

Voters sent initiatives on parents' rights and girls' sports to the Legislature, but the majority refused to act and refused to listen. Republicans pushed for hearings and votes, but when those were blocked, we held our own public listening sessions. People showed up. We packed two hearing rooms, and thousands more watched online to have their voices heard. That's the level of engagement the Legislature should be responding to, not ignoring.

### **Defeating the Initiative Killer Bill**

We also stopped Senate Bill 5973, which would have made it significantly harder and more expensive for citizens to bring forward initiatives. At a time when the majority was already ignoring voters, this would have made it even harder for people to push back. We killed the bill and preserved that right.



## **PROTECTING SMALL BUSINESSES AND LOWERING UTILITY COSTS**

In a session often defined by rising costs, we secured two significant victories to provide financial relief and cut bureaucratic red tape. Senate Bill 5874 and Senate Bill 5690 both became law this March, shielding your wallet from hidden state mandates.

### **Ending "Gotcha" Penalties for Small Businesses**

For too long, local employers have been hit with nearly \$2 million in "gotcha" fines for minor clerical errors in state reporting — often caused by simple software glitches. SB 5874 puts a stop to this by allowing the Employment Security Department to waive these penalties (ranging from \$75 to \$250). Our small-business owners should be focused on growth and creating jobs, not fighting the state over a technical typo.

### **Shielding Families from Rising Utility Rates**

When the state mandates fish-barrier removals (culverts), the cost to move power, water, and broadband lines is massive. Historically, these costs were passed directly to you through higher monthly utility bills. SB 5690 changes that by requiring the Department of Transportation to provide a year's notice for projects and mandating that the state maximize federal funding to cover relocation costs. This acts as a shield against sudden rate hikes driven by state projects.

Both measures take effect June 11, marking a major step toward making state government more accountable and less burdensome for the 35th District.



## **FIGHTING THE "FEE BOMB" ON OUR SHELLFISH FARMS**

Shellfish farming is a cornerstone of the 35th District, but a recent Department of Health "fee bomb" threatened to shutter 20% of our local farms. While steep increases technically began on February 1, we secured a major win. New budget provisos slashed those costs for 2026 and 2027. Better yet, the state must reimburse anyone who paid the higher rates. We stopped this disaster and ensured no local farm is buried by these hikes.

## **PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR WALLET**

Through vigorous floor fights and sustained opposition, Republicans blocked a series of proposals that would have made Washington less safe and more expensive.

- HB 2389:** Early release of dangerous juvenile offenders
- HB 1125:** Lowered criminal sentences
- HB 1178:** Reduced penalties for drug and gang crimes
- HB 2403:** Softened sex offender registration requirements
- HB 2489:** Allowed encampments on public property statewide
- HB 2421:** New state fees on vehicle tires
- SB 5797:** Wealth tax on families and employers
- HB 2100:** New payroll tax on jobs and wages
- HB 1420:** New tax on clothing and everyday purchases
- HB 2559:** Rental housing tax that would raise rents
- HB 2073:** Tax on health insurance reserves, driving up premiums
- HB 1607:** A bottle deposit scheme that amounted to a billion-dollar grocery tax



## PUBLIC SAFETY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND FASTER JUSTICE

Washington faces a massive DUI toxicology backlog that delays justice and allows dangerous drivers to remain on the road. With roughly 16,000 cases pending, results take between 10 months and two years. That leaves victims waiting and creates severe public safety risks.

We worked to pass Senate Bill 5880, which allows certified private labs to assist when the Washington State Patrol lab is overwhelmed. We also secured \$4 million to reduce turnaround times and clear the backlog.

The human cost of these delays is devastating. In one recent case, when a Belfair driver's test results took a year, they stayed on the road and caused a deadly crash. This law is about stopping those avoidable tragedies before another family loses a loved one.

### Delivering Immediate Affordability Relief for Retirees

To address Washington's cost-of-living crisis, we passed House Bill 2124. This law allows retirees to receive meaningful lump-sum pension payouts instead of tiny monthly checks, putting money back into their pockets now — all without raising taxes or growing government.



### Protecting Vulnerable Children

Protecting vulnerable children should be the most basic responsibility of government, but right now, Washington is failing them. Since changes in state law raised the standard for intervention, preventable child deaths and near deaths have skyrocketed in cases involving the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Too often, these cases involve young children, often babies and toddlers, left in homes where hard drug use like fentanyl is present, and the government stands by until it's too late. The results are devastating.

This is not a right-versus-left issue; it's a right-versus-wrong issue. Removing a child from a home is traumatic, but it's far less traumatic than being dead. If a child dies, there is no chance of keeping that family together — ever.

We introduced legislation and funding to fix this travesty and allow earlier intervention to protect children before tragedy strikes. Despite growing bipartisan support, the majority refused to fix it, and our effort fell just three votes short.

A state that cannot protect children under its watch has lost the moral authority to do anything else. We will never stop fighting until this law is changed and innocent children are protected.

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SEN. DREW MacEWEN  
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## DELIVERING LOCAL WINS FOR THE 35TH

### Saving the Belfair Bypass (State Route 3 Freight Corridor)

Our top transportation priority this year was protecting the project to create the State Route 3 Freight Corridor, also known as the Belfair Bypass. In December, the governor's proposed budget included cuts that would have delayed this essential project by several more years. We knew the 35th District could not afford to wait even longer.

We met directly with budget writers and the governor's staff, and our persistence paid off. We successfully restored the funding, securing nearly \$44 million to keep the project on track.

### Critical Infrastructure and Public Safety

Beyond the bypass, we secured several key wins in the supplemental capital and transportation budgets that focus on safety and affordability:

- **Mason County 911 Modernization (\$433,000):** When you call 911, every second matters. This investment ensures dispatchers have the tools and facilities they need to save lives.
- **Highway Safety Improvements:** We secured **\$2 million** for safety jersey barriers on US 101/SR 3 and **\$3.15 million** for intersection improvements at Wallace Kneeland Boulevard and Shelton Springs Road.
- **Grid Resilience and Community Support:** We secured funding for Mason PUD 1 grid resilience, transit support for the Squaxin Island Tribe, and timberland acquisition for the Skokomish.
- **Kitsap County: \$118,000** for the Crosby Community Center Restoration.
- **South Thurston County: \$220,000** for an Outdoor Community Education Center.

These projects bring your tax dollars back home to fix our roads, protect our water, and keep our community safe. We will always fight for our local priorities to make sure the 35th District is never ignored by Olympia. That's the work that matters. Roads. Infrastructure. Growing our local economy and preserving the communities we call home.

