

2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Rep. Leonard Christian

CAPITOL OFFICE:

122C Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

CAPITOL PHONE:

Toll Free: (800) 562-6000
Direct Line: (360) 786-7984

EMAIL: Leonard.Christian@leg.wa.gov

WEB: RepresentativeLeonardChristian.com

COMMITTEES:

- State Government and Tribal Relations (Assistant Ranking Member)
- Capital Budget
- Innovation, Community and Economic Development, and Veterans



Rep. Suzanne Schmidt

CAPITOL OFFICE:

468 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

CAPITOL PHONE:

Toll Free: (800) 562-6000
Direct Line: (360) 786-7820

EMAIL: Suzanne.Schmidt@leg.wa.gov

WEB: RepresentativeSuzanneSchmidt.com

COMMITTEES:

- Labor and Workplace Standards (Ranking Member)
- Postsecondary Education and Workforce
- Transportation
- Rules



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We are back from Olympia after a historic 60-day legislative session. We appreciate all of you who contacted us with questions, concerns and feedback. Your support and engagement are important to our work as your state representatives.

There were some good, bipartisan legislative victories, among them the three citizen-driven initiatives. There were many other bipartisan achievements, but there also continues to be ongoing challenges in Washington. We are concerned about the sustainability of our state budget, no tax relief for citizens and affordability issues.

You can read the session's successes and disappointments in this 4th District Legislative Report.

In the meantime, we will continue to advocate on your behalf. Please remember we work for you year-round. Do not hesitate to contact us if you need assistance navigating state government, want to schedule a meeting or would like us to tour a facility or speak to your association or organization.

We are working hard to represent the 4th District. Together, we can make Washington state a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you for allowing us to represent you in Olympia!

Handwritten signature of Leonard G. Christian in blue ink.

Rep. Leonard Christian

Handwritten signature of Suzanne Schmidt in blue ink.

Rep. Suzanne Schmidt





GUN-RELATED LEGISLATION

The majority party continues to erode citizens' Second Amendment rights by approving three bills this session. **House Bill 1903** makes it a civil infraction to fail to report a stolen or lost firearm within 24 hours, **Senate Bill 5444** further restricts where you can legally carry and **House Bill 2118** puts onerous new regulations on firearm businesses.

INCREASING ENERGY COSTS

One of the worst bills to pass this session was **House Bill 1589**. It allows Puget Sound Energy to blend the gas and electric line of business into one rate base. This is a move toward banning natural gas as an energy source. It will increase costs for ratepayers, drive-up energy costs and impact the entire state.

Senate Bill 6058 amends the Climate Commitment Act to facilitate a linkage of carbon markets with California and Quebec, Canada's largest province. There is concern this will also drive up our energy and fuel prices. We are linking with California which has higher fuel prices, higher housing costs, and higher electricity costs than we do.



OPERATING BUDGET

The supplemental operating budget passed on party lines in the House, with House Republicans voting "no." The spending plan does increase spending for special education, child care, and behavioral health, and does not increase taxes. However, there are several reasons we voted no including:

- The budget has more than doubled over the last 10 years.
- It increases spending by about \$2 billion in a "supplemental" budget year. The 2014 supplemental budget increased spending by \$200 million.
- It provides no tax relief for middle-class families despite Washington being one of the least affordable states in the country. (#3 for gas prices, #4 for grocery prices and #4 for housing costs.)
- It spreads spending over 1,000 separate line items instead of focusing on key priorities.

Operating Budget Spending by Biennium

dollars in billions



REP. SUZANNE SCHMIDT

With my business background and being the lead Republican on the House Labor and Workplace Standards Committee, much of my focus is on employer-employee issues. Our small businesses are the backbone of our state economy. Their success benefits employers, employees, and consumers, and it is needed at a time, when many are struggling with affordability issues. This session, I passed two business-related bills.

- **House Bill 2127** provides workers' compensation incentives by increasing reimbursement amounts and new training programs as part of our state's Stay at Work Program and Preferred Worker Program. The right-to-work incentives benefit employers and employees. We want to get people back to work.
- **House Bill 1898** streamlines the process related to unemployment insurance (UI) benefit charging. Recent legislation modifying UI eligibility and benefit charging did not consistently address how benefits are charged to employers. It has been a very burdensome process. I worked with the Employment Security Department on this legislation.

Our 4th District legislative team worked collaboratively on the capital budget with each of us focusing on different projects. I strongly advocated for the Spokane Valley Cross-Country Course and the Spokane Scale House Market and Kitchen.

I plan to continue working on two issues that received a lot of attention during session. I t through the legislative process. Both had well-attended public hearings.

- **House Bill 2079** would deter assaults and threats of violence at public schools. I want to improve school safety for officials and school staff by increasing penalties for intimidation, threat of force or violence at elementary and secondary schools and school-related athletic activities. A watered-down version of this bill passed the House unanimously but stalled in the Senate.
- **House Bill 2087** would help eliminate barriers to getting apprenticeship programs approved in our state. It would streamline the process and deter frivolous and unreasonable objections. We have a workforce shortage in our trades and need to get more people through the apprenticeship program.

REP. LEONARD CHRISTIAN

As a retired military veteran, it has been my honor to continue serving you as your state representative in Olympia. During these past two years, I have been fighting against policies that violate your constitutional rights hurt jobs and the economy, and embolden criminals.

This year was unique: We were able to achieve major victories by restoring the ability of law enforcement officers to pursue suspects, strengthening parental rights and passing an anti-income tax measure into state law. All those victories were accomplished thanks to the active participation of **people like you** – active citizens willing to get involved in their government.

This year, I was the assistant ranking member on the House State Government and Tribal Relations Committee, where we stopped one of the worst bills to receive a public hearing in recent years: **House Bill 2030**. Shockingly, this bill would have allowed criminals – including murderers and rapists – to serve as jurors, vote and run for elected office **while in prison**.

I spoke out strongly against this measure, and the bill died in committee after receiving significant public backlash. We have to be vigilant and stand up against radical proposals like this in the future.

I also serve on the House Capital Budget Committee, where I worked hard to direct dollars back to our district. I am proud of the investments we were able to secure for the 4th District. This bipartisan budget will help bring jobs to our region, boost the local economy and build critical infrastructure.

Finally, as a member of the House Innovation, Community and Economic Development, and Veteran Committee, I worked hard to help our veterans and pass commonsense laws that improve our business climate and expand economic opportunities.



CAPITAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The capital budget, often referred to as the state construction budget, makes investments across our state. We steered more than \$9.5 million back into the 4th District. State spending, combined with 2023, will amount to more than \$22 million for our region.

Local projects include:

- \$4.8 million for the Kaiser Aluminum boiler replacement;
- \$2 million for the Seven Nations Healing Lodge youth expansion to help improve behavioral health care;
- \$1 million for Broadway Senior Housing, a 60-unit affordable senior housing complex;
- \$975,000 for Spokane County Gray and Oregon Road forest fire recovery;
- \$300,000 to design and implement accessibility for Scale House Market and Kitchen, including ADA parking accommodations and exterior lighting;
- \$258,000 for a playground at Intersection Preschool and Daycare;
- \$150,000 for the Spokane Valley Cross Country Course; and
- \$32,000 for the W. Valley Centennial Middle School field, fences and dugout.

The complete \$1.33 billion spending plan invests heavily in K-12 school construction, mental health facilities, housing, and early learning facilities.

Statewide highlights from **Senate Bill 5949** include:

K-12 school construction

- \$115 million for the Small District and Tribal Compact Schools Modernization program, which provides planning and

construction grants for school districts with fewer than 1,000 students and that have significant building deficiencies.

- \$79.2 million to increase the construction cost allocation from \$271.61 per square foot to \$375.00 per square foot in FY 2025.
- This is used to determine the maximum cost per square foot of construction that the state will recognize in the School Construction Assistance Program.
- \$45 million to improve school districts' indoor air quality and energy efficiency, with much of the grant funds going to school districts with 3,000 enrollments or fewer.
- \$60 million for Career and Technical Education projects at skills centers and technical schools, including Tri-Tech Skills Center and Wenatchee Valley Technical Skills Center.
- \$1 million for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a proposal to modify and improve the School Construction Assistance Program with input from the Legislature, governor and other K-12 stakeholders. The proposal must consider variation in district sizes and financial capacity, in addition to other factors.

Behavioral health treatment

- \$82.7 million for grants to community behavioral health projects across the state.
- \$16.2 million to purchase and renovate the former Daybreak Youth Services building, for Madrona Recovery to operate a behavioral health and substance abuse treatment facility for youth.
- \$5 million for the design of 20 new beds for youth housing at the Child Study and Treatment Center in Lakewood.

Housing

- \$127.5 million for the Housing Trust Fund, including:
 - \$20 million for homeownership opportunities;
 - \$19 million for housing for those with developmental disabilities; and
 - \$15 million for the acquisition and preservation of mobile homes.
 - \$55 million for multifamily building efficiency grants.

Department of Commerce

Community Grant Programs

- \$26.6 million for the Early Learning Facilities grant program to expand access to affordable child care.
- \$72.5 million for local and community projects statewide.

Natural resources

- \$22.2 million to the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board to continue assisting local governments in removing fish barriers and restoring fish passage.
- \$11.1 million to the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program for the restoration of shorelines and nearshore habitat critical to salmon.
- \$10 million for wildfire reforestation grants, furthering carbon sequestration by helping public and private forests regrow lost trees due to wildfires.
- \$7.9 million for the Washington Coastal Restoration and Resiliency Initiative program, restoring shorelines and habitat on the coast.

About 10% (\$130.5 million) of this supplemental budget is funded with general obligation bonds. Article VIII, Section I of the Washington State Constitution requires a three-fifths vote to contract debt, which was authorized during the 2023 session.

DEFENSIVE WINS

Success in Olympia is also stopping bad legislation. This session we prevented some harmful bills from passing, including a hospital consolidation measure that would be devastating to rural health care, tripling of local property tax rates, rent control, convicted felons on juries and unemployment benefits for striking workers.

The following bad bills died during the 2024 session:

- **House Bill 1579** – Would have authorized the attorney general, with jurisdiction concurrent with prosecuting attorneys, to investigate and prosecute crimes involving police use of deadly force.
- **House Bill 1893** – Would have allowed workers who strike or are locked out by an employer to qualify for unemployment benefits.
- **House Bill 1932** – Would have permitted cities, counties and certain special purpose districts to choose to hold elections in even-numbered years instead of odd-numbered years.

- **House Bill 2001** – Would have allowed judges to reduce sentences of convicted criminals, other than a person sentenced as a persistent offender or for Aggravated Murder in the first degree, after they serve seven to 10 years.
- **House Bill 2051** – Would have banned many small gas-powered motors such as leaf blowers, lawn mowers and snow blowers.
- **House Bill 2114** – Would have capped rent increases at 7% per year, capped fees and allowed tenants to break leases with no penalty.
- **House Bill 2177** – Would have changed the name of the Sex Offender Policy Board to the Sex Offense Policy Board, and expanded membership of the Board, to include a convicted sex offender.
- **House 2030** – Would have allowed criminals to vote, serve on juries and run for public office **while in prison**.





GET MORE INFORMATION, GET INVOLVED!

Many of the bills you have read about in this newsletter came to us as suggestions from citizens like you! We invite and encourage you to contact our offices any time you have questions, comments or suggestions about legislation, or need help navigating state government.

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

**LEONARD CHRISTIAN &
SUZANNE SCHMIDT**

4TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 1885

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION

Most of the work done in Olympia is done in a bipartisan manner. Working together we were able to pass some good legislation this session, including:

- **House Bill 1899** helps qualifying property owners and local governments rebuild buildings damaged or destroyed by wildfires. We were co-sponsors of this legislation as part of wildfire recovery efforts. It is far from what was originally sponsored, which was disappointing.
- **House Bill 2153** establishes new felony and gross misdemeanor crimes for trafficking in, possessing, selling, or offering to sell catalytic converters.
- **House Bill 2375** extends the senior property tax exemption and deferral programs to detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- **House Bill 1987** allows rural public facilities sales and use tax to be used for affordable workforce housing.
- **House Bill 1982** makes the Community Economic Revitalization Board's (CERB) Rural Broadband Program permanent.
- **House Bill 2003** creates a leasehold excise tax exemption when public lands are used for affordable housing.
- **House Bill 1989** establishes a pilot program designed to test innovative technologies and techniques to prevent graffiti and restore the aesthetics of public spaces through swift and efficient cleanup.