



Session Watch

Monday, February 17, 2025 (day 36 of the 120-day Session)

As we work through week 6 of the legislative session, the budget situation lawmakers are addressing this year is beginning to come into clearer view. Legislators aren't waiting until the March 20th revenue projection to start slashing spending in areas where the need is less than others. One Democrat lawmaker who serves on the Appropriations Committee told me this week that "the gap we are trying to fill might be closer to \$16 billion." With that in mind committee chairs have been advised to "slow walk" or refuse to hear bills that have a fiscal note of over \$250,000 attached to them. This process will continue to play out until budget writers have landed on a balanced book over a four-year outlook.

As we get closer to the fiscal cutoff date of February 28th, we will see more and more bills not get selected for a committee hearing based on their price tag. This is the tightest budget situation lawmakers have been in since the great recession for the 2009-2011 budget. As a reminder, in that budget year the state allocated approximately \$32 billion to run all government services. This year the budget will be greater than \$80 billion, and the last budget was North of \$70 billion. During that time our state population has grown 16% while state spending has increased 150%.

Assembly Hall Property Tax Exemption:

[SB 5252](#) – Senator Shewmake has authored a bill at the request of Grange member Russ Weston in the 42nd Legislative District. This bill would remove the acreage restriction on tax exemptions for assembly halls like our Granges. This bill was successfully voted out of committee on February 6th and has been sent to Rules committee as the final hurdle before a full floor vote. The primary goal of this bill is to broaden the eligibility for property tax exemptions for nonprofit organizations, like Grange Halls, by eliminating the restrictions based on the size of the land used for public assembly halls and meeting places.

Mileage Surcharge:

In [HB 1921](#) Rep. Jake Fey (D-Tacoma), Chair of the House Transportation Committee, has introduced a bill charging drivers based on the number of miles they drive annually.

The bill proposes a transition to a road usage charge (RUC) system to replace the traditional gas tax as a primary source of transportation funding. Here's how the bill works:

Purpose:

- The bill aims to address the declining revenue from the gas tax due to increasing numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) and more fuel-efficient cars, which use less gasoline.
- The bill proposes a fee of 2.6 cents per mile driven. This equates to \$26 per 1000 miles.
- Charge would be included in the annual vehicle registration fee for vehicles weighing under 10,000 pounds.

Implementation Phases:

Phase 1 (2027-2029): Voluntary for EV and hybrid drivers, with registration fees waived for participants.

Phase 2 (2029-2031): Mandatory for EVs and hybrids; voluntary for gas vehicles with 20+ mpg.

Phase 3 (2031-2035): Mandatory for all gas vehicles with 20+ mpg, phasing in from most to least fuel-efficient.

Drivers would self-report their odometer readings annually as part of the vehicle registration process. This honor system approach aims to address privacy concerns associated with tracking devices or GPS systems. Many lawmakers believe this self-reporting system won't be part of future "trailer" bills to adjust this legislation.

Our traditional gas taxes contribute over a third to the state's transportation budget, amounting to \$1.3 billion each year. This bill also puts an end-of-year 10% surcharge on the total number of miles driven.

Ag Overtime Exemption:

There are still no expectations that Democrat lawmakers will give producers a reprieve from mandated overtime wages. [HB 1597](#). This bill has not been scheduled even for a first public hearing, and with the policy cutoff deadline fast approaching the chances for this policy are all but put on hold until the 2026 session.

Rent Control:

[HB 1217](#) aims to address housing stability by introducing measures to control rent increases and related fees. In summary the bill caps rent increases at 7% for tenants in Washington State.

Key Points:

- **Rent and Fee Increases:** The bill proposes to limit rent, and fee increases to 7% during any 12-month period. It also prohibits any rent, or fee increases during the first 12 months of a lease.
- **Landlords** would be required to provide notification for any rent or fee increases, with additional penalties for increases over 3%.
- **Fee and Deposit Limits:** It includes provisions to cap late fees, security deposits, and move-in fees.
- **Lease Termination:** Tenants would have the ability to terminate their lease without penalty if there's an excessive rent increase, providing some flexibility for tenants facing significant rent hikes.

This bill was one of the first policy bills heard this session and has had quite a journey through the process. Right now, it sits in Rules Committee awaiting a “pull” for a final vote on the House Floor. As in year’s past there is expected to be a party line vote on this bill and then the Senate will determine if it has the votes or political capital to finally get it over the finish line this year.

As we go throughout the session you can follow along the [daily schedule of the legislature](#) and see the [Senate Floor Calendar](#) and the [House Floor Calendar](#).

Washington State Grange Legislative Advisory Committee Meetings Set:

Monday, February 24 at 6pm

Monday, March 3 at 6pm

Monday, March 17 at 6pm

Monday, April 7 at 6pm

Monday, April 21 at 6pm

Upcoming Events

Agriculture & Natural Resources (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 2/17 @ 1:30pm

- [SB 5354](#) - Public Hearing - Providing flexibility for the department of fish and wildlife to collaborate with local governments to manage gray wolves. (Remote Testimony Available).

Environment & Energy (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 2/17 @ 1:30pm

- [HB 1409](#) - Exec Session - Concerning the clean fuels program.

Agriculture & Natural Resources (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 2/18 @ 10:30am

Civil Rights & Judiciary (House) - HHR A and Virtual JLOB - 2/18 @ 10:30am

- [HB 1218](#) - Exec Session - Concerning persons referred for competency evaluation and restoration services.

Environment, Energy & Technology (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 2/18 @ 1:30pm

- [SB 5033](#) - Exec Session - Concerning sampling or testing of biosolids for PFAS chemicals.

Transportation (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 2/18 @ 4:00pm

- [SB 5726](#) - Public Hearing - Establishing new sources of transportation revenue based on motor vehicle use of public roadways. (Remote Testimony Available). (Oppose)

Civil Rights & Judiciary (House) - HHR A and Virtual JLOB - 2/19 @ 8:00am

Environment, Energy & Technology (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 2/19 @ 8:00am

- [SB 5630](#) - Public Hearing - Continuing to provide payments to support farm fuel users and transporters for exempt fuel under the Washington climate commitment act. (Remote Testimony Available).

Environment & Energy (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 2/20 @ 8:00am

- [HB 1912](#) - Exec Session - Concerning the exemption for fuels used for agricultural purposes in the climate commitment act.

Agriculture & Natural Resources (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 2/20 @ 1:30pm

- [SB 5385](#) - Exec Session - Amending the definition of timberland for purposes of determining the real property excise tax for a governmental entity.
- [SB 5117](#) - Exec Session - Protecting agriculture. (Support)

Local Government (Senate) - SHR 3 and Virtual JACB - 2/20 @ 1:30pm

- [SB 5633](#) - Public Hearing - Concerning the subdivision of land. (Remote Testimony Available).
- [SB 5055](#) - Exec Session - Promoting agritourism in Washington. (Support)

Agriculture & Natural Resources (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 2/21 @ 10:30am

- [HB 1311](#) - Exec Session - Concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the department of fish and wildlife regarding the gray wolf.

WASHINGTON STATE GRANGE BILL TRACKING REPORT

High Priority Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
SSB 5252	Assembly halls/property tax	Removing the acreage limit on the property tax exemption for nonprofit public assembly halls and meeting places.	S Rules 2	Shewmake	Support

Other Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
SHB 1071 (SB 5058)	Recycling rates	Implementing strategies to achieve higher recycling rates within Washington's existing solid waste management system.	H Approps	Fey	
HB 1118	Firearm rights restoration	Concerning restoration of the right to possess a firearm.	H Civil R & Judi	Simmons	Support
SHB 1132	Bulk firearm purchases	Enhancing public safety by limiting bulk purchases and transfers of firearms and ammunition.	H Rules R	Farivar	Oppose
SHB 1141 (SB 5468)	Ag. cannabis workers	Concerning collective bargaining for agricultural cannabis workers.	H Rules R	Ortiz-Self	
ESHB 1149 (SB 5376)	Cruelty to animals	Preventing cruelty to animals.	S Law & Justice	Hackney	
SHB 1150 (SB 5284)	Solid waste management	Improving Washington's solid waste management outcomes.	H Approps	Berry	
HB 1152	Firearm storage	Enhancing public safety by establishing secure storage requirements for firearms in vehicles and residences.	H Rules R	Doglio	Oppose
SHB 1163 (SB 5140)	Firearm purchase	Enhancing requirements relating to the purchase, transfer, and possession of firearms.	H Approps	Berry	Oppose
HB 1173 (SB 5447)	High-hazard facility wages	Concerning wages for journeypersons in high-hazard facilities.	H Rules R	Bronoske	
HB 1181	Labor standards	Concerning labor standards and the Washington minimum wage act.	H Labor & Workpl	Mena	
HB 1184	Overtime exemption	Creating a narrow exemption from overtime provisions for certain nonprofits and small businesses.	H Labor & Workpl	Schmidt	
HB 1197 (SB 5166)	Operating budget, supp.	Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium second supplemental operating appropriations.	H Approps	Ormsby	
HB 1198 (SB 5167)	Operating budget	Making 2025-2027 fiscal biennium operating appropriations.	H Approps	Ormsby	

HB 1218	Competency eval. & restor.	Concerning persons referred for competency evaluation and restoration services.	H Civil R & Judi	Farivar	
HB 1311	Gray wolves	Concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the department of fish and wildlife regarding the gray wolf.	H Ag&Nr	Engell	
HB 1320	Business & occupation tax	Modifying business and occupation tax rates to fund programs and services to benefit Washingtonians.	H Finance	Street	
HB 1334	Property tax revenue growth	Modifying the annual regular property tax revenue growth limit.	H Finance	Pollet	
HB 1409	Clean fuels program	Concerning the clean fuels program.	H Env & Energy	Fitzgibbon	
HB 1442 (SB 5354)	Gray wolf management	Providing flexibility for the department of fish and wildlife to collaborate with local governments to manage gray wolves.	H Ag&Nr	Abell	
HB 1588 (SB 5474)	Organic, etc. agriculture	Expanding opportunities for organic, regenerative, climate-smart, and sustainable producers.	H Ag&Nr	Bernbaum	
HB 1597 (SB 5487)	Agricultural overtime	Authorizing agricultural employers to select 12 weeks a year to employ workers for up to 50 hours a week before overtime applies.	H Labor & Workpl	Dent	Support
HB 1603	Medicare supp. coverage	Requiring guaranteed issue of medicare supplemental coverage to an individual who voluntarily disenrolls from a medicare advantage plan and enrolls in medicare parts A and B.	H HC/Wellness	Berg	
HB 1625 (SB 5631)	Back country search & rescue	Supporting back country search and rescue organizations and volunteers through the creation of the back country search and rescue grant program.	H Tech, Econ Dev	Stuebe	
HB 1630	Livestock methane emissions	Concerning livestock methane emissions.	H Env & Energy	Parshley	Oppose
HB 1779	Ag. employers/overtime	Authorizing agricultural employers to select 26 weeks a year to employ workers for up to 50 hours a week before overtime applies.	H Labor & Workpl	Dufault	
HB 1906	Water system rates	Increasing transparency and consumer protection in water system rates.	H Env & Energy	Tharinger	
HB 1912	Agricultural fuel/CCA ex.	Concerning the exemption for fuels used for agricultural purposes in the climate commitment act.	H Env & Energy	Dent	
HB 1921 (SB 5726)	Transportation revenue	Establishing new sources of transportation revenue based on motor vehicle use of public roadways.	H Transportation	Fey	Oppose
SB 5023 (HB 1561)	Domestic workers	Providing labor market protections for domestic workers.	S Labor & Comm	Saldana	

SB 5033	Biosolids/PFAS chemicals	Concerning sampling or testing of biosolids for PFAS chemicals.	S Environment, En	Wilson	
SB 5041	Unemp ins/strikes & lockouts	Concerning unemployment insurance benefits for striking or lockout workers.	S Labor & Comm	Riccelli	
SB 5055	Agritourism	Promoting agritourism in Washington.	S Loc Gov	Warnick	Support
SB 5056	WSP firearms records system	Concerning Washington state patrol providing firearm background checks when state record systems are unavailable.	S Law & Justice	Wagoner	Support
SB 5057	Agricultural real estate	Concerning ownership of agricultural real estate.	S Law & Justice	Wagoner	Support
SB 5058 (SHB 1071)	Recycling rates	Implementing strategies to achieve higher recycling rates within Washington's existing solid waste management system.	S Environment, E	Chapman	
SB 5074	Turfgrass seed contracts	Concerning the payment of turfgrass seed contracts.	S Ag & Natural R	Boehnke	Support
SB 5078	Agricultural real estate	Concerning ownership of agricultural real estate.	S Law & Justice	Boehnke	Support
SB 5092	Farm machinery sales tax	Providing a sales and use tax exemption for qualifying farm machinery and equipment.	S Ag & Natural R	Boehnke	Support
SSB 5098	Weapons in certain areas	Restricting the possession of weapons on the premises of state or local public buildings, parks or playground facilities where children are likely to be present, and county fairs and county fair facilities.	S Transportation	Valdez	Oppose
SSB 5099	Firearms dealers	Protecting the public from gun violence by establishing additional requirements for the business operations of licensed firearms dealers.	S Ways & Means	Lovick	
SB 5117	Agriculture impacts	Protecting agriculture.	S Ag & Natural R	Muzzall	Support
SB 5140 (SHB 1163)	Firearm purchase	Enhancing requirements relating to the purchase, transfer, and possession of firearms.	S Law & Justice	Lias	Oppose
SSB 5165	Deer and elk damage	Concerning compensation in frontier counties for deer and elk damage.	S 2nd Reading	Short	Support
SB 5166 (HB 1197)	Operating budget, supp.	Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium second supplemental operating appropriations.	S Ways & Means	Robinson	
SB 5167 (HB 1198)	Operating budget	Making 2025-2027 fiscal biennium operating appropriations.	S Ways & Means	Robinson	
SB 5171	Wolf predation	Concerning livestock damage due to wolf predation.	S Ag & Natural R	Short	Support
SB 5174	Wood burning devices	Concerning wood burning devices.	S Environment, E	Shewmake	Oppose
SB 5284 (SHB 1150)	Solid waste management	Improving Washington's solid waste management outcomes.	S Environment, E	Lovelett	

SB 5343	NE WA wolf-livestock account	Concerning the northeast Washington wolf-livestock management account.	S Passed 3rd	Short	
SB 5350	Firearm background checks	Concerning background check system for firearms transfers.	S Law & Justice	Fortunato	
SB 5354 (HB 1442)	Gray wolf management	Providing flexibility for the department of fish and wildlife to collaborate with local governments to manage gray wolves.	S Ag & Natural R	Short	
SB 5384	Riparian programs review	Conducting a review of Washington's riparian programs.	S Ag & Natural R	Dozier	
SB 5385 (HB 1641)	Definition of timberland	Amending the definition of timberland for purposes of determining the real property excise tax for a governmental entity.	S Ag & Natural R	Chapman	
SB 5443	Fund-raising events	Concerning requirements for fund-raising events of bona fide charitable or nonprofit organizations.	S Business, Fin	Cortes	Support
SB 5447 (HB 1173)	High-hazard facility wages	Concerning wages for journeypersons in high-hazard facilities.	S Labor & Comm	Saldana	
SB 5474 (HB 1588)	Organic, etc. agriculture	Expanding opportunities for organic, regenerative, climate-smart, and sustainable producers.	S Ag & Natural Re	Lias	
SB 5485	Livestock identification	Concerning livestock identification.	S Ag & Natural Re	Warnick	Support
SB 5487 (HB 1597)	Agricultural overtime	Authorizing agricultural employers to select 12 weeks a year to employ workers for up to 50 hours a week before overtime applies.	S Labor & Comm	King	Support
SB 5630	Farm fuel users	Continuing to provide payments to support farm fuel users and transporters for exempt fuel under the Washington climate commitment act.	S Environment, E	Dozier	
SB 5631 (HB 1625)	Back country search & rescue	Supporting back country search and rescue organizations and volunteers through the creation of the back country search and rescue grant program.	S State Gov/Trib	Goehner	
SB 5633	Subdivision of land	Concerning the subdivision of land.	S Loc Gov	Lovelett	
SB 5726 (HB 1921)	Transportation revenue	Establishing new sources of transportation revenue based on motor vehicle use of public roadways.	S Transportation	Ramos	Oppose

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