

7th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 2023 SESSION REPORT

2023 session ends with significant work left to do on public safety



SHORT – KRETZ – MAYCUMBER

REPRESENTING WASHINGTON'S 7TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



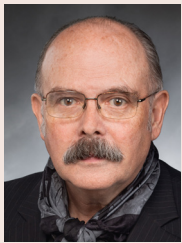
**Sen. Shelly
Short**

R-Addy

Mailing Address:
409 Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40407
Olympia, WA 98504

Email: Shelly.Short@leg.wa.gov

Phone: (360) 786-7612



**Rep. Joel
Kretz**

R-Wauconda

Mailing Address:
425A Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Email: Joel.Kretz@leg.wa.gov

Phone: (360) 786-7988



**Rep. Jacquelin
Maycumber**

R-Republic

Mailing Address:
425B Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Email: Jacquelin.Maycumber@leg.wa.gov

Phone: (360) 786-7908

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Washington Legislature has wrapped up its business for the year in Olympia, after a 105-day regular session and a one-day special session on May 16. In this **session report**, we'll tell you about the biggest debates and most important issues for north-central and northeastern Washington.

Those of you who are hearing from us for the first time — **welcome!** Our legislative district, the largest in the state, grew significantly after redistricting last year. The 7th District now stretches from the northeastern corner of the state to parts of Douglas County, and covers all or part of six more — Ferry, Grant, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Stevens.

There are changes this year within our delegation as well. Rep. **Joel Kretz**, who served 14 years as deputy leader of the House Republican Caucus, stepped down from his leadership position at the end of the session, while he retains his seat in the House. Meanwhile, Sen. **Shelly Short** and Rep. **Jacquelin Maycumber** continue the 7th District's tradition of legislative leadership, as Republican floor leaders in House and Senate.

This was the sixth session since the Legislature fell under one-party control in 2018, and we noticed a shift in the wind. Some of our biggest debates were about fixing the damage caused by majority Democrats and their "progressive" agenda. We spent much of the session trying to restore police pursuits and drug laws weakened by the majority party two years ago. Unfortunately, we got only partway due to fierce resistance from urban members.

Meanwhile, ideology and political agendas continued to drive other issues – like 2nd Amendment restrictions and repeal of citizen initiatives. Big problems with a new payroll tax for long-term care went unaddressed. A \$70 billion operating budget continued worrisome spending trends. And the governor's cap-and-trade scheme continues to increase fuel costs, adding an additional \$.45 cents per gallon to the price of gas and \$.54 cents per gallon for diesel. Washington state now leads the nation in average gas prices at \$4.91 (as of June) but areas in our district are seeing nearly \$6 per gallon!

These were just a few of the top issues this year. Keep reading for more. And please, use the contacts on this page to let us know what you think, or if you need our help in dealing with a state agency. Serving you is our most important duty.

Sen. Shelly Short

Rep. Joel Kretz

Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:

1-800-562-6000

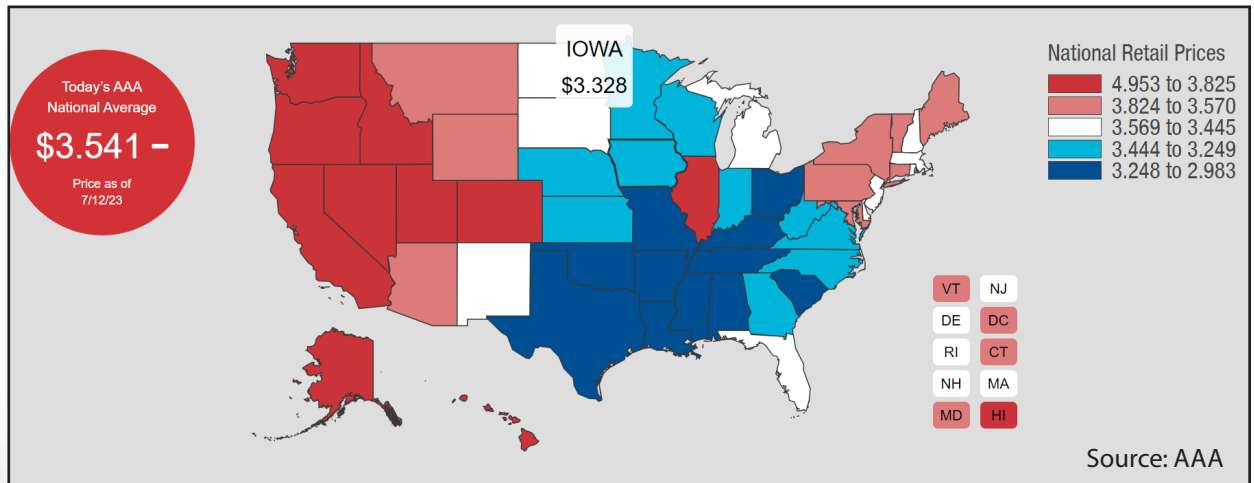
HEARING-IMPAIRED HOTLINE (TTY):

1-800-833-6388

SHELLY SHORT • JOEL KRETZ • JACQUELIN MAYCUMBER

Washington state now has highest gas prices in the nation!

In June of this year, Washington state surpassed California with the highest gas prices in the nation at \$4.91 per gallon. But we're seeing prices exceed that in many rural areas. Much of this increase is due to a policy pushed by Gov. Jay Inslee and majority party Democrats in Olympia: Cap and Trade (or the Climate Commitment Act, CCA).



The CCA was passed by Democrats in 2021. It requires certain entities to purchase carbon allowances to offset their carbon emissions in order to meet the state's goals for emissions reductions at certain intervals. The ultimate goal is 95% below 1990 levels by 2050. A sharp reduction is required at the beginning of their program, which creates a scarcity of available carbon emission reductions at auction. This scarcity has driven up carbon credit prices – by design – and thus gas prices as the costs get passed on to consumers. According to the Washington Research Council, the CCA is currently adding \$.44 per gallon for gas and \$.55 for diesel.

We voted against the CCA in 2021 and warned Democrats that increased fuel prices would land squarely on the backs of those who can least afford it. As the public pushes back on this scheme, we will be looking at further options to eliminate or reform the CCA, or provide rebates to licensed drivers. The state is taking in a windfall of money from the CCA; money that should go back to the people instead of the governor's pet global warming projects. If you are angry about the price of gas, please know you are not alone! We are too! And the blame lies at the feet of Gov. Inslee and Democrat legislators.

Second Amendment under attack

Gov. Jay Inslee and Attorney General Bob Ferguson led the charge this session to limit your ability to defend yourself against violent criminals. In perhaps one of the most partisan issues of the session, Democrats voted to ban certain semiautomatic firearms and the nation's most popular sporting rifles (**HB 1240**). This will do nothing to decrease crime or violent assaults. The idea that criminals intent on harming others will obey this law is naive.

In addition, the majority party passed legislation requiring state-approved gun safety courses for anyone wanting to purchase a firearm (**HB 1143**). But what happens when there are a hundred thousand people waiting to purchase a firearm and only a handful of state-approved teachers and classes? That single mother with a restraining order against an abusive partner now has to wait months or even years

to get the state-approved training in order to purchase the means to protect herself and her family.

Finally, in what can only be described as the "Lawyers Field Day" legislation, Democrats passed legislation enabling the attorney general to sue manufacturers when guns are used in a crime (**SB 5078**).

We voted against all three of these bills, none of which make Washingtonians safer. None of them address the root causes of violent crime in our communities. These new laws will only affect law-abiding gun owners, who use firearms for sport, and to protect themselves, their families and loved ones. We expect legal challenges to prevail against these assaults upon our fundamental rights protected by both our federal and state constitutions.

2023 SESSION IN REVIEW

Public safety is top issue of 2023 session

The Defund the Police movement of a few years ago resulted in civil unrest in Seattle and the safety of our families, children, and communities severely threatened. Innocents have been killed as violent crime has risen to near-record highs, along with property theft, auto theft, and drug crimes. Many law enforcement officers have left the profession or moved to other states. Washington now has the lowest number of law enforcement per capita in the nation. Public safety was the issue of the year as lawmakers debated restoration of police pursuits and tougher penalties for possession of hard drugs.

Vehicular pursuits

The old saying, “criminals are dumb but they’re not stupid” has played out multiple times in recent months, as lawbreakers take advantage of Washington’s ill-considered ban on most police pursuits. Police used



to be able to give chase based on “reasonable suspicion,” but for the last two years they have been forced to watch criminals flee because urban Democrats insisted on a near-impossible “probable cause” standard. Since then, property crimes have skyrocketed – vehicle theft is up 50 percent. Criminals have actually called 911 to complain police are breaking the law by chasing them.

Drug possession

This year’s Legislature was under pressure to fix the law. We would have preferred the old one, but urban members insisted on keeping the handcuffs on law enforcement. In the end, the Legislature passed a watered-down compromise (**SB 5352**) that all three of us opposed. The new law allows police pursuits based on reasonable suspicion of a violent crime, a prisoner escape or a DUI. Unfortunately, it continues to prohibit pursuits for most non-violent crimes, including auto theft, burglary, stalking, reckless driving, and others. We will continue to work next session on this issue to ensure law enforcement has the tools to keep our communities safe.

The state Supreme Court two years ago overturned our felony statutes against hard-drug possession on a technicality. Rather than fix the problem, our colleagues insisted on making possession a hard-to-enforce misdemeanor, passing a stopgap measure set to expire June 30. Drug use exploded statewide, and the Legislature knew for two years it needed a new solution. Yet House Democrats balked at a bipartisan compromise from the Senate, delayed a vote until the last day of the regular session, tried passing an even-less-enforceable measure, and failed. It took a special session to bring a solution to the table.

We supported **SB 5536** despite it not being exactly what we wanted. It addresses the court’s technical concern by returning the word “knowingly” to our statutes, similar to Rep. Maycumber’s proposal, **HB 1415**. The final compromise defines knowing possession and knowing drug usage in a public place as gross misdemeanors. It combines consequences and accountability with investments in services and opportunities for assistance for those struggling with substance abuse.

Although we would have liked more tools for prosecutors and law enforcement, the alternative was no drug law at all. We must have a law on the books if we are to get addicts the help they need. As our drug crisis continues, this law will give us something to tweak and toughen in the future.



The Legislature was forced into special session May 16 after House Democrats balked at tougher penalties for possession of hard drugs and public use.



SHELLY SHORT • JOEL KRETZ • JACQUELIN MAYCUMBER



Sen. Shelly Short

As floor leader for the Senate Republican Caucus in 2023, Sen. Shelly Short led her team during floor sessions and made motions on its behalf. This put her in the center of the action during the Legislature's biggest debates. In this first in-person session since COVID, Shelly says Republicans and Democrats talked more, and across-the-aisle negotiation increased. "Seeing people face to face made a difference," she says. "The bipartisan cooperation on public safety was promising, even if we didn't go far enough. I just wish it had extended to more of the issues that came up this year."

Shelly was part of two important bipartisan initiatives. She passed two bills to relax Growth Management Act requirements on small cities (**SB 5457** and **SB 5374**), part of a larger effort to promote new home construction. Shelly also worked with Democrats to highlight the plight of smalltown and independent pharmacies due to health insurer payment practices. Legislation to ensure fair dealing did not advance,

but Shelly succeeded in passing **SB 5066**, subjecting contracts to the scrutiny of the state Insurance Commissioner. Other bills passed by Shelly this year were:

- **SB 5065**, encouraging high school students to participate in bone marrow donation registry programs.
- **SB 5145**, clarifying liability for recreational activities near federally licensed dams. Boaters, swimmers and fishers are at their own risk.



Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber's bill (**HB 1013**) to create regional apprenticeship programs in underserved high schools was signed into law. She has called it "Running Start for the Trades."

"This bill is about providing an education for the future. We need to encourage our young people to explore new careers and connect them to the trades. We know that great, family-wage jobs await them after high school."

Her bill will introduce students to various trades and allow them to develop basic skills and knowledge while assessing their interest and abilities.

Jacquelin also had her auto theft bill signed into law. **HB 1682** places millions of dedicated funds into the auto theft prevention account, effectively increasing resources available to local officials to counter the dramatic increase in auto thefts. Jacquelin said:

"When an auto theft occurs it takes away our ability to live our lives. Auto theft is endangering lives and costing our citizens time and money while providing many substance abusers and career criminals an easy financial score."

Jacquelin was also able to get a unanimous budget amendment approved to offer millions more for Veterans Service Officers (VSO) in central and northeast Washington. VSOs help veterans gain access to the services, care, and benefits they've earned through their years of service to our country. In the first six months of the fiscal year, veterans (and their families) in Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille counties, are receiving over \$84,000 per month in military disability payments they are due as a result of our expanded VSO efforts.

2023 SESSION IN REVIEW

Rep. Joel Kretz

After serving as deputy Republican leader in the state House since 2009, Rep. Joel Kretz stepped down from that elected leadership position at the end of the 2023 legislative session. In his words:

"It's been an honor to be part of several different leadership teams, working to ensure House Republican solutions and ideas make it into final legislative proposals. However, I believe it is time for new leaders to step forward and offer fresh perspectives and new insights."

Joel had **HB 1700** signed into law this session. For years, he has worked to get urban west side legislators to understand rural Washington issues. He's hosted wolf and wildfire work sessions, invited legislators to his ranch in Wauconda, and arranged tours of local ranches and farms. His efforts to remind lawmakers that there is more to Washington state than what you can see from atop the Space Needle led him to introduce HB 1700. Originally it called for an Eastern Washington monument to be placed on the Capitol grounds. Because of the complexities involved in creating a monument, the bill was amended to create an Eastern Washington landscape at the Capitol.

Joel also worked with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to push back on Gov. Jay Inslee's riparian buffer proposal. He was one of the main sponsors of **HB 1720** which would protect and restore riparian areas by establishing a *voluntary*, regionally focused riparian grant program to improve the ecological functions of critical riparian management zones. He was able to help secure \$200 million for this grant program and the bill was unanimously passed out of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. However, Gov. Inslee applied political pressure and killed the bill, preferring instead a solution that places state agencies and agency personnel above farmers, ranchers, and tribal interests. This battle will continue into next session.



Worst bills of the session

Although bipartisan cooperation improved this session, we continued to see legislation this year from majority Democrats that took the state in the wrong direction. A few highlights:

- **SB 5599** – Erodes parental rights and allows shelters to NOT notify parents that their children are at a shelter if they are receiving gender-affirming care or reproductive services.
- **SB 5217** – Washington voters 20 years ago objected to costly and unlimited regulation when they passed Initiative 841, blocking the Department of Labor and Industries from regulating workplace ergonomics. Democratic lawmakers overruled the people and repealed the initiative.
- **SB 5082** – Cancels Washington's unique tax advisory votes, created by voter-approved Initiative 960 in 2007, and eliminates what little voice the people have when the Legislature raises taxes without voter approval. Democrats called the votes "confusing."
- **HB 1333** – A chilling misuse of government power, Attorney General Bob Ferguson asked lawmakers to create a Domestic Violent Extremism Commission to suppress conservative critics. Didn't pass.
- **HB 1181** – Adds a climate change element to the Growth Management Act, requires land-use planning to incorporate trip reduction, and increases construction costs during an affordable housing shortage.
- **SB 5209** – Mandatory voting measure that would have required Washington residents to cast ballots in every major election, eliminating the option of "no, thank you." Didn't pass.
- **HB 1169** – Eliminates a requirement that convicted felons pay into a fund for crime victims, and shifts these costs to taxpayers.
- **HB 1074** – Imposes cumbersome new requirements on landlords claiming damages by tenants.

2023 SESSION IN REVIEW

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

Sen. Shelly Short
Rep. Joel Kretz
Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

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

LD7

Legislature's capital budget launches projects across 7th District

The state's capital budget is the "bricks and mortar" budget. It is used for local community investments and projects and is funded by state bonds. We were able to secure funding for several area projects, including:

- Lake Roosevelt Community Health Centers in Inchelium and Keller
- Brewster Boys and Girls Club
- Conconully Service Complex/Fire Hall
- Stadium light project in Republic
- Nespelem Community Longhouse
- Elmer City fire station improvements
- Twisp confluence floodway restoration project
- Zosel Dam preservation
- Metaline Falls school flooring replacement
- Small school district and tribal compact schools modernization
- And much more...

This year's capital budget was one of the bipartisan highlights of the session. Republican budget leaders were involved in the budget-writing process from the beginning. Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle and in both chambers worked hard to make sure all of Washington was involved in the distribution of important community investments.

Does your paycheck look smaller this summer?

Starting July 1, most Washington workers began paying a new payroll tax for a first-of-its-kind insurance program for long-term care. Unfortunately, with a meager maximum lifetime payout of just \$36,500, benefits will cover only a few months' stay in a nursing home. And if you move to another state, you can't take it with you.



Nearly 63% of Washington voters rejected this program in 2019 but the majority party enacted it against the will of the people. We think the Legislature should have repealed it. If people want this coverage, they can go to the private sector to get much better plans that are portable to other states and have additional financial benefits. In 2021, a half-million Washington residents agreed with us by obtaining more robust private insurance and opting out of the government's plan. If you didn't, it's too late. The current tax rate is 58 cents for each \$100 of income, but watch for this program to become bigger and more expensive — they always do.