



2024 SESSION REPORT

SEN. SHELLY SHORT

REP. KRETZ • REP. MAYCUMBER

REPRESENTING WASHINGTON'S 7TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Sen. Shelly Short



R-Addy

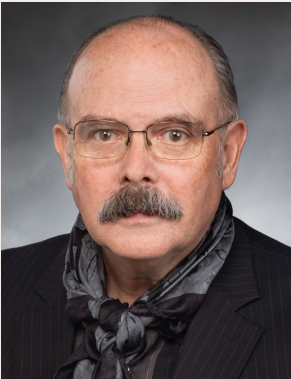
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In Olympia this year, the people's voices made a difference

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This year in Olympia, the people reminded the Legislature of something important. They showed us they are in charge of their government, not the other way around. By presenting us with six initiatives, they demonstrated their frustration with the Legislature's direction, and they drove our session from start to finish.

As your lawmakers from the 7th Legislative District, we were delighted to see it happen. We agree the Legislature has gone down the wrong path these last several years under the control of a Seattle-dominated majority. We think the Legislature should listen more to the people, keep government lean and effective, and protect public safety and the rights of the individual. What happened this year was a good start, and we only hope the trend continues.

In this newsletter, we'll tell you about this and other important developments from our 2024 legislative session. For two of us, this year is an important milestone. Rep. Joel Kretz is retiring this year after a distinguished 20 years in the Legislature, 14 of them as deputy leader of the House Republican Caucus. His work on reforming our state's wildfire response and forest management leaves a lasting legacy that will save lives, property and forests.

Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber is leaving the state House after an equally distinguished seven-year career, including three terms as House Republican floor leader. She has been noted for her work in expanding veterans service officer programs, creating more apprenticeship programs for rural students, improving credit access for small rural businesses, capping the cost of life-saving insulin and increasing transparency in pharmacy interactions with patients. Her common-sense approach to legislating will be missed, and we wish her well in future endeavors.

Meanwhile, Sen. Shelly Short continues to serve as floor leader for the Senate Republican Caucus, putting her in the middle of all the Senate's debates.

Even though the session is over, we continue to represent you in the Legislature. If you have comments or concerns about the direction of state government, or you have a problem with a state agency, we hope you will drop us a line or give us a call. Our most important duty is to serve you.

Sen. Shelly Short

Rep. Joel Kretz

Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:

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1-800-833-6388



“The first power reserved by the people is the initiative.”

Washington State Constitution, Article II, Section 1

INITIATIVES SET THE PACE FOR OLYMPIA IN 2024

Six measures from the people changed the course of the session

This year’s legislative session demonstrated how powerful the people can be when they speak – and how frustrated they become when their interests take a backseat to political agendas. Since 2018, the Washington Legislature has been under the control of a majority that appears determined to remake the state in Seattle’s image. This year the people said they had enough, by collecting 2.6 million signatures and presenting the Legislature with six initiatives.

Initiatives cast a long shadow

These initiatives challenged key elements of the program our colleagues have pursued these last several years — higher taxes, weaker law enforcement and greater government control over our lives – the opposite of what most of us would call progress. This initiative “six pack” hung over our session as a rebuke from the people. We kept up the pressure and demanded that the majority party allow the Legislature to vote.

Our colleagues recognized the overwhelming popularity of these measures. So they reluctantly agreed to allow votes on three of them. We were delighted to join our fellow Republicans in voting to pass:

- **Initiative 2081**, which affirms parental rights in public-school education,
- **Initiative 2111**, which prohibits state and local personal income taxes, and
- **Initiative 2113**, which restores the ability of police to pursue fleeing suspects.

Three initiatives advance to the November ballot

Unfortunately, our colleagues would not allow us to vote on the three remaining initiatives. So these measures will advance to the fall general election ballot. They are:

- **Initiative 2109**, repealing the state’s new income tax on capital gains,
- **Initiative 2117**, repealing the state’s new cap-and-trade taxes, and
- **Initiative 2124**, allowing Washington workers to opt out of a new mandatory payroll tax for long-term care.



BIG SCHEMES STUMBLE AND FALTER

The people’s willingness to speak up this year affected other issues. For example, a proposal strongly favored by local-government interests from King County would have allowed **property taxes** to rise three times faster than they already do (**Senate Bill 5770**). Within a decade this would have been the biggest tax increase in state history. Public uproar helped defeat this bill.

Proposals for greater state government power and authority also failed amid this new skepticism – including **an increase in real estate taxes, unemployment insurance for striking workers and state regulation of hospital mergers.**

The people’s reproach wasn’t enough to stop every bad idea – see *related story about this year’s natural gas bill*. But this session it seemed the Legislature listened a little better. Thanks to your voices, we made headway this year.



2024 SESSION IN REVIEW



Credit: CC by-SA 4.0/ Carlos534

BILL SETS UP A NATURAL GAS BAN IN THE PUGET SOUND AREA – REST OF US COULD BE NEXT

Climate agenda will force alarming costs on Western Washington homeowners, cause power bills to soar

Anyone with a gas furnace should be concerned about **House Bill 1589**, a new law that sets up the Puget Sound area for a ban on natural gas. It doesn't apply to

our part of the state, for now, but it's only a matter of time before we see efforts to shut down natural gas statewide.

Under this law, Puget Sound Energy, the state's largest utility, will submit plans to state regulators by 2027 to begin phasing out gas service to its 900,000 gas customers, forcing them to convert to electricity. Rates will skyrocket. Homeowners will face an average \$40,000 cost to replace furnaces and other appliances and to replace wiring and electrical equipment. Businesses will face punishing costs as commercial service is ended. How our electric grid will handle this new demand, nobody knows.

Even if this concept is extended statewide, it would have no measurable impact on world climate, because Washington emissions are small and this would reduce them only a smidge. But a ban on natural gas certainly would make it harder for us to get through those tough Inland Northwest winters. The war on natural gas has begun, and if the people of Washington want to keep their clean, affordable and reliable gas furnaces, they will need to make sure Olympia hears from them about it.

GREENHOUSE GARDENING GETS A BOOST

Five bills sponsored by Short are signed into law



Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture

A bill boosting greenhouse gardening is among five passed by Sen. Shelly Short this year. **Senate Bill 5508**, inspired by the shortages of food and produce we saw during the COVID pandemic, exempts non-commercial "temporary greenhouses" from state building code requirements. These temporary greenhouses can be as simple as a frame with a plastic covering, but also can be much more elaborate. By utilizing heat to extend the

growing season, they make it easier to grow food for yourself and your community.

Three Short bills are designed to give local governments greater flexibility in addressing local development needs under state land-use rules. **Senate Bill 5834** allows local governments to adjust urban growth boundaries to meet developments on an annual basis, rather than waiting for 10-year updates to comprehensive plans. **Senate Bill 5869** allows rural fire stations to be built on lots of two acres or less, if conditions are met. **Senate Bill 6140** allows rural stores and restaurants of up to 10,000 square feet at crossroads and other locations where development is permitted.

Senate Bill 5306 allows the Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish inspection stations along state highways, for optional inspections for hunters, boaters and anyone else carrying fish, wildlife, shellfish and seaweed. The goal is to prevent the spread of infestations and diseases such as chronic wasting disease, or the introduction of zebra or quagga mussels into Washington waterways.



Credit: CC by 2.0/ Joseph

NEW LAW PROTECTS INDEPENDENT SMALLTOWN PHARMACIES

Senate Bill 5213, co-sponsored by Short, aims to protect small pharmacies from increasingly powerful pharmacy benefit managers. These firms, which act as middlemen between pharmacies, patients and insurance companies, have faced little public scrutiny as they have grown to dominate the field. This measure, signed into law after two years of debate, aims to preserve independent and smalltown pharmacies by allowing the state Insurance Commissioner to regulate reimbursement policies, patient charges and other business practices.

SEN. SHORT • REP. KRETZ • REP. MAYCUMBER

SHELLY SHORT



When we consider sweeping new policies in the Legislature, we should always ask ourselves if the benefit is worth the cost. I was reminded of that as we debated **House Bill 1589**, this year's legislation to phase out natural gas in the Puget Sound area. This bill sets us up for a shutdown of natural gas service in our state's most populous region, at vast expense to homeowners, business and industry – for a climate benefit so small that it will be impossible to measure.



As floor leader for the Senate Republican Caucus, I find myself in the middle of the Legislature's biggest debates. None right now are more consequential than energy. We are starting to recognize the impacts that agenda-driven green-energy policies are having on individuals, our economy and the reliability of our electric grid. We will need a more reasoned approach if we are going to avoid California-style chaos.

This year the initiatives brought balance to a Legislature that needs it, and we saw a more pragmatic approach to other issues. The session showed us we can make progress when we put agendas aside and put the needs of the people first. I am proud that the people of the 7th District have elected me to represent them, and I look forward to bringing our region's pragmatic outlook to every issue we consider.

JOEL KRETZ



After a lot of thought, prayer and family considerations, I have decided not to run again for the Legislature. I will finish out my current term ending in early January 2025.

It's been 20 years. Serving the folks in the legendary 7th District has been the honor of a lifetime. And legendary you are.

People from the 7th District are well known in Olympia for **making the longest drives** and **showing up in the greatest numbers** of any district in the state when critical things are on the line. The best days were when you all showed up in my office and reminded me why I am here. There were a lot of nights when I was worn out and battered, wondering why I was here, and I would dream of faces from back home that gave me the resolve to get up in the morning and jump back into the trenches to fight for our way of life.

While there were many issues over the years upon which I had a "behind the scenes" influence, the reality is that wildfires and wolves rose to the forefront. While I wish more Western Washington legisla-



tors could be brought to understand the wolf issue for us in Northeast Washington, I do believe we made significant progress in wildfire response, prevention, management and interagency communications. This includes prescribed burns, updated comms, more air suppression resources and local quick-action abilities to keep fires small. I am extremely proud of the work we have done in these areas. I am sad that it took the disastrous fires of 2014 and 2015 to get Olympia folks on board, but I do believe our rural communities and our forests will be better off as a result of our bipartisan work.

Finally, a huge THANK YOU to you, my constituents, for the many years of support and advice, and the occasional trip behind the woodshed when I needed it. You are the reason this job consumed me for the better part of two decades. Please continue your involvement and hold your future legislators accountable. Be kind, but always remember: They work for you!

2024 SESSION IN REVIEW



JACQUELIN MAYCUMBER

As floor leader once again this session, I led the fight against bills that would ban natural gas in new housing and reduce mandatory sentences for murderers, and I led efforts to help pass the three voter-mandated initiatives that were eventually approved by the Legislature.

One particularly bad bill was **House Bill 2030**. This shortsighted and dangerous policy would allow felons the right to vote and hold office while serving in prison. Pedophiles could be elected to school boards, rapists could be elected to city councils and murderers could serve as jurors. A prison in a rural area could impact local elections. This sounds outrageous because it is. More importantly, it is offensive to victims and their families and people living in these locations. Fortunately, we were able to kill this bill.

While we weren't successful in stopping every bad bill, our efforts helped push back against some of the policies coming from liberal Seattle-centric lawmakers.

Leaving the Legislature, but not saying goodbye

I will be leaving the Legislature at the end of my term. But public service is in my blood. My family

has a long history of serving our community and striving to preserve our family values, our rural way of life and the love we all have for the liberties, freedoms and opportunities this great nation has afforded each of us.

I am proud of the work we've done over the years to reduce homelessness in wildfire areas, increase veterans' access to benefits and services they have earned, ensuring small rural businesses have access to the credit they need and providing our students more options with expanded apprenticeship programs.

My experience as a mother, a wife, a former law enforcement officer and school board member motivated my decision to run for office and guided me while voting on legislation. I always kept you in mind with every amendment, every late-night fight on the House floor, every bill I sponsored and every piece of legislation I voted on.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you. It has been the honor of a lifetime.



MAYCUMBER BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW



Two Maycumber bills became law during the 68th Legislature, both in 2023.

House Bill 1013 creates high school apprenticeship programs for rural and underserved communities, offering alternative paths for students seeking skilled careers.

House Bill 1682 provides full funding for the state's auto theft prevention account, which helps cover education, prevention, law enforcement, investigation, prosecution and confinement costs. The measure has increased funding and will result in more convictions.

KRETZ BILLS BECOME LAW

House Bill 1835 is among bills sponsored by Rep. Joel Kretz signed into law during the 68th Legislature in 2023 and 2024. The measure adds "frontier county" to the legal definitions in state law that determine certain excise taxes, contracts with the state Department of Commerce, and more specifically, rural broadband funding. The new definition could help lawmakers target assistance to economically distressed counties.

House Bill 1700 establishes an Eastern Washington "cultural landscape feature" on the state Capitol campus, exhibiting flora and fauna of the region.

House Bill 2424 establishes cooperative wildlife management agreements between the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Colville Tribes on the "north half" in Northeast Washington, especially in the area of wolf management. The agreements will bring tribal expertise in wolf management to areas overseen by the state.

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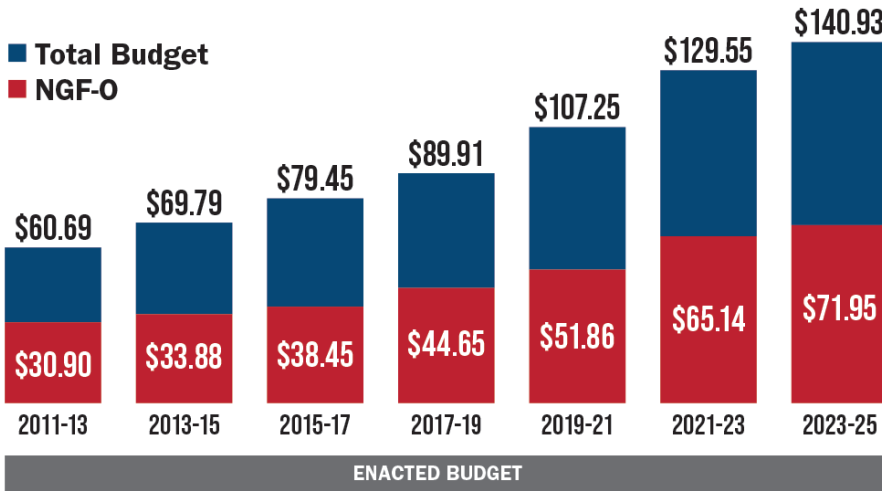
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Did you know --?

STATE SPENDING DOUBLES IN A DECADE

dollars in billions



This year's \$71.9 billion budget supplements the two-year budget passed by the Legislature in April 2023. It has no new taxes and a much higher reserve than the governor originally proposed. But the trend remains worrisome, as state spending remains on a perilously high trajectory. This trend can't be sustained forever. In this time of fast-rising consumer prices, shouldn't we be looking at tax relief?



Lawmakers spent 60 days at the Capitol in 2024, meeting from Jan. 8 to March 7. Well-wishers filled the House and Senate chambers after the final gavels fell to end the 2024 legislative session.