

WHATCOM COUNTY 2026 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

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POLICY ADVISORS

TODAY'S DISCUSSION



- 2026 Session Overview
- Whatcom County Priorities
- Next Session
- WSAC Priorities
- Next Steps
- Questions



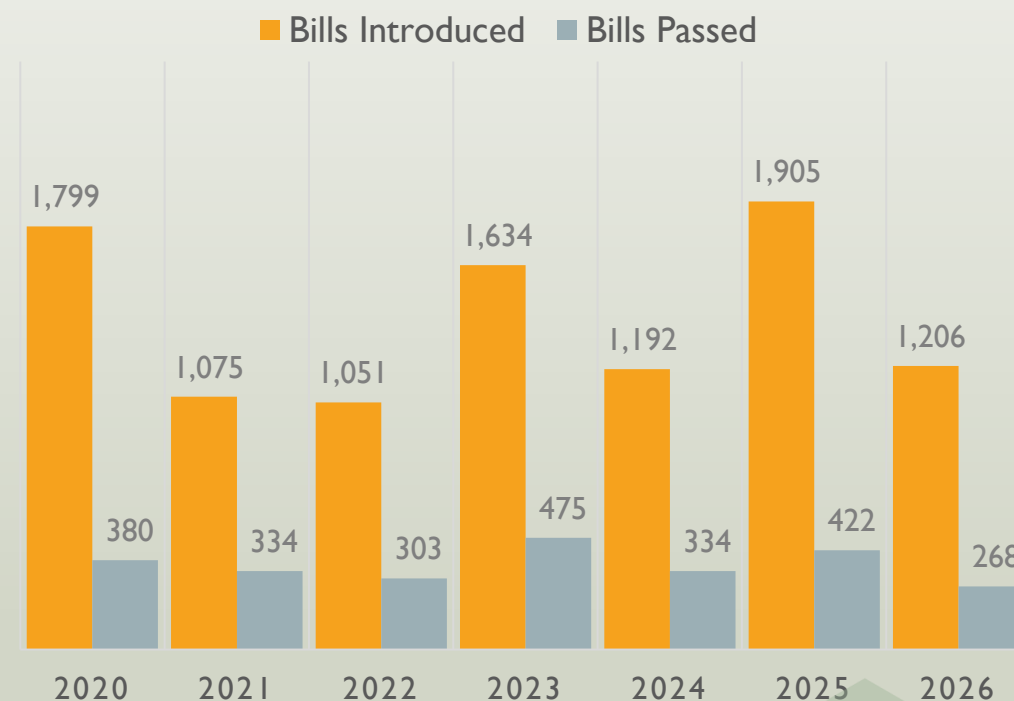
2026 SESSION OVERVIEW

General Context

- Second year of the biennium; 60-day session
- Adopted supplemental operating, capital, and transportation budgets – detail on next slide.
- 1,206 bills introduced, 268 passed into law

Political Context

- Democrats held the majority in House and Senate
 - 59-39 in House
 - 30-19 in Senate



2026 SESSION OVERVIEW - BUDGETS

Supplemental Operating Budget

- \$79.4 billion biennial expenditures
- Cuts, shifts, one-time spending
- Income tax on millionaires
 - Sales tax reductions negatively impact local governments

Supplemental Transportation Budget

- \$16.6 billion biennial expenditures
- Truly supplemental

Supplemental Capital Budget

- \$540 million in projects shifted from bond revenue to Climate Commitment Act revenues
- \$1 billion shifted from capital budget to operating budget



WHATCOM COUNTY PRIORITIES



- ✓ HB 2588 – Ferry Districts
- ✓ Crisis & Treatment Center
- ✓ Superior Court Funding for Adjudication - \$817,000
- ✗ Indigent Defense



WHATCOM COUNTY PRIORITIES

✓ Flood Relief Funding

- Operating Budget
 - Military Department authority to expend FEMA \$
- Capital Budget
 - \$5 million for low-income home rehab
 - \$10 million for local government infrastructure, via Public Works Board
 - \$26 million for specific projects, over \$14 million in Whatcom County
 - \$2 million for county risk and needs assessments
- \$3 million for counties to remove debris in waterways
- Transportation Budget
 - \$2 million to assist owners of damaged recreational vehicles
 - \$30 million through CRAB for county infrastructure as a bridge to FEMA reimbursement
 - \$15 million through TIB for city infrastructure



NEXT SESSION

Budget Year

- New biennial budgets for 2027-2029
- Operating and transportation likely to be limited; capital may hold opportunity
- Revenue Forecasts: June 26; September 25; November 16
- Governor Ferguson proposed budgets in early December

Changes at the Legislature

- 14 new House members; 5 new Senate members (current House members running for 4)
- Every House position and 24 Senate seats are up for election
- Changes with House budget chairs: Rep. Ormsby (Appropriations) and Representative Tharinger (Capital Budget) are both retiring

Likely Topics

- Budget challenges – operating and transportation
- Annexation, even-year elections, housing & homelessness, property tax relief, juvenile justice, crime victim funding



NEXT STEPS - LOBBYING IS A YEAR-ROUND EFFORT

June - July

- Review last session (today)
- Brainstorm 2027 requests

August - September

- Meet with delegation members to discuss possible requests and ensure alignment
- Build coalitions
- Refine possible requests

October - December

- Finalize requests
- Adapt as necessary – elections, economy, etc.
- Prepare materials, handouts, forms, etc.
- First day of session is January 11



QUESTIONS?

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