

WHATCOM COUNTY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

October 7, 2025

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POLICY ADVISORS

TODAY'S DISCUSSION



- 2025 Session
 - Overview
 - WSAC Priorities
 - Whatcom County Priorities
- 2026 Session – What to Expect
- Agenda Setting
- Questions & Discussion

2025 SESSION OVERVIEW

- Budgets

- Operating - \$77.8 billion biennial expenditures
 - \$25 million savings from Gov. Ferguson vetoes
 - 8.2% increase - \$4.4 billion new revenue
- Capital -\$7.6 billion biennial expenditures
 - Average local community project was \$578,000
- Transportation \$15.5 billion biennial expenditures
 - \$3.2 billion in new revenue over 6 years

- Bills

- 1,903 introduced; 422 passed; 1 vetoed – 22% passage rate



2025 SESSION WSAC PRIORITIES (EXPANDED)

- 1% Property Tax Cap (HB 2049/SB 5812)
- Cannabis Revenue (HB 1704/SB 5547)
- Graduated REET (HB 2027)
- County Utility Tax (HB 1702)
- Indigent Defense (HB 1592/SB 5404)
- Road Usage Charge (HB 1921/SB 5726)
- CRAB Local County Access Roads (HB 1098/SB 5544)
- EFSEC Liability Protection (SB 5317)
- Medicaid Reprourement (SB 1813)
- ADUs Outside UGAs (HB 1345/SB 5470)
- MFTE Expansion (HB 1206/SB 5679)
- Density in UGAs (SB 5471)
- Rural County Coroner Cost (SB 5089)
- Public Safety Funding (HB 2015)
- REET Harmonization (HB 1791)

2025 SESSION WHATCOM COUNTY

- Nooksack Adjudication
 - \$200,000 of \$600,000 request for technical assistance (operating budget)
 - \$1.25 million for county facility needs. \$2.8 requested. (capital budget)
 - \$0 for Superior Court needs
- Lummi Ferry – funding reappropriated. No new funding
- \$4 million for the Swift Creek settlement decree (capital budget). \$11.6 requested
- \$10 million for phase 4 of the Nooksack River floodplain project
- \$1.17 million for the county alternative response team
- \$11.5 million for county 23-hour crisis relief center was reappropriated (capital budget)
- \$15 million in operating budget for grants to 23-hour crisis relief centers, but not including Whatcom County
- Recovery navigator program reduced by 20%
- Public health funding reduced by at least \$24 million
- No proviso for north sound assessment of youth co-occurring treatment needs



2026 SESSION WHAT TO EXPECT

- 9 legislative elections
 - Won't impact majorities; will impact tenor
- 60 days starting Monday, Jan. 12
- Bills introduced in 2025 but not passed are eligible in 2026
- Operating budget problems
 - \$900 million less than June forecast
 - Next revenue forecast is Nov. 18
- Governor's proposed supplemental
 - Early/mid December

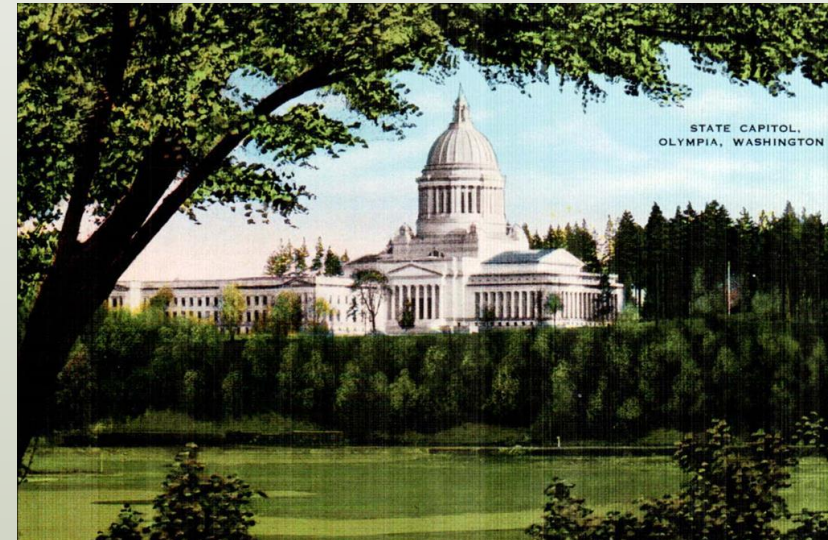
AGENDA SETTING



- Recommend prioritizing items that only Whatcom County will champion
- Opportunities in the capital budget
- Returning bills
- Defend against the worst cuts

AGENDA SETTING

- Ideas Percolating:
 - Bill to eliminate restriction that county ferry districts are limited to “passenger only” service
 - Adjudication funding for Superior Court
- Advocacy Opportunities:
 - WSAC conference & LSC meeting
 - Outreach to legislators, governor’s office staff, agencies
 - Legislative committee assembly



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

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