

2024 SESSION REVIEW

4th Legislative District • Spokane Valley, Liberty Lake and NE Spokane County

Sen Mike Padden

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LEGISLATURE PASSES BILL THAT COULD END RETAIL GUN SALES

One of the worst bills passed by Democrat majorities this year could end retail firearm sales in Washington. HB 2118 would require firearm dealers to install burdensome security features and alarm and surveillance systems, and adopt redundant storage and very burdensome record-keeping practices. It also would set minimum insurance-coverage requirements and require employees to undergo annual background checks.

Our state already maintains electronic records of every firearm transaction, through the Washington State Patrol and state Department of Licensing. Despite that, HB 2118 would force the roughly 1,300 retailers with federal firearms licenses (FFLs) to keep paper copies of these transactions as long as they are in business.

The Seattle Times, which typically publishes editorials that support gun-control measures, actually ran an editorial that opposes HB 2118. The editorial said this bill pushes gun control to a level of punishment for legitimate businesses, and it pointed out that HB 2118 would impose costs on small firearms sellers that could force them out of business and expand the black market for gun sales.

I strongly opposed and spoke against this legislation.



NATURAL GAS IN HOMES THREATENED UNDER NEW LAW

Possibly the worst bill approved by the Legislature this session is House Bill 1589, which would allow Puget Sound Energy, the state's largest gas-and-electric utility, to stop providing natural gas to thousands of customers in its service territory starting in 2027. This measure likely will dramatically increase the cost of housing in our state.

Because of this new law, every PSE customer who has a gas furnace or a gas water heater will be forced to pay to replace it. It is estimated that replacing a furnace will cost tens of thousands of dollars. Homeowners who live outside PSE's service territory should not feel safe from this bad new law. Majority Democrats in the Legislature clearly are intent on passing costly laws that they think will reverse climate change. It would not be surprising if Democrats soon target natural-gas furnaces in the rest of Washington.

Serving the communities of Spokane Valley, Liberty Lake and NE Spokane County

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- Law and Justice (Ranking Republican)
- Health and Long Term Care
- Transportation



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 60-day legislative session in Olympia ended on March 7. During the final days of session, the Legislature approved final versions of the state supplemental operating, capital and transportation budgets, which make adjustments to the two-year spending plans passed last spring. The Legislature also passed three initiatives sent there by citizens.

This newsletter looks at some key issues from this session, as well as 4th District projects funded in the capital and transportation budgets.

If you have questions or comments about the session, or ideas for legislation for next year, please let me know by emailing me at mike.padden@leg.wa.gov or calling my district office at 509-921-2460.

Thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your 4th District state senator.

Best regards,

Sen. Mike Padden



4TH DISTRICT PROJECTS FUNDED IN SUPPLEMENTAL CAPITAL BUDGET

The Legislature unanimously approved the final version of this year's supplemental state capital budget. It includes funding for several projects in the 4th District. It's good to see taxpayers' money returning to our area. The 4th District projects include:

- \$3.5 million in toxic cleanup funding for homes affected by the Grays Road and Oregon wildfires in Spokane County last August, plus another \$975,000 for the Spokane Conservation District to implement wildfire recovery efforts.
- \$4.8 million to replace the boiler at the Kaiser Aluminum plant in Spokane Valley. Kaiser, which employs 1,100 workers living in the Spokane Valley area, is matching the capital budget funds.
- \$2 million for Seven Nations Healing Lodge youth expansion.
- \$1 million for Broadway Senior Housing.
- \$300,000 in phase two funding for Spokane Scale House Farmer's Market in Spokane Valley. The 2023-25 budget included \$750,000 for Spokane Scale House Farmer's Market, located at Spokane Conservation District.
- \$258,000 for a playground at The Intersection Preschool and Childcare on North McDonald Road.
- \$150,000 for the city of Spokane Valley Cross Country and Cyclocross Sports Complex.
- \$32,000 for the West Valley Centennial Middle School baseball field's fences and dugout.

LEGISLATURE PASSES THREE OF SIX INITIATIVES SENT TO US



During the final week of session, a very historic event happened when the Legislature passed three initiatives that were sent to it in January, including one to improve public safety in Washington.

Initiative 2113 would restore the ability of Washington police officers to engage in vehicular pursuits. I-2113 is a major step toward making Washington communities safer and reversing the growing crime problem in Washington.

Thanks to state laws like the one passed by majority Democrats in 2021 that restrict when law-enforcement officers can engage in vehicle pursuits of suspects, criminals have become more emboldened. As a result, many Washingtonians have been victims of auto theft, retail theft, burglary and other property crimes. Making matters worse, many auto thieves use the stolen

vehicles to smash into “pot shops” to steal cash, or use these cars to crash into other stores to steal merchandise.

Before the change in the pursuit law, the statewide record for stolen cars in a single year was 30,000. That record increased to nearly 47,000 stolen vehicles in 2022. Washington is now fourth in the U.S. for auto thefts per capita. Thanks to I-2113, law-enforcement officers will once again be able to pursue suspects instead of helplessly watching them drive away.

The other two initiatives that were approved by the Legislature are:

- **I-2081** would give parents the right to review K-12 instructional materials and require parental notification of school-provided medical services.
- **I-2111** would ban any state or local income tax in Washington.

I supported all three measures, which will go into effect June 6.

The other three initiatives sent to the Legislature were not approved this session. Majority Democrats refused to give them public hearings or bring them to a vote. As a result, they will appear on the statewide ballot this November. They are:

- **I-2109** would repeal the state capital-gains income tax that was passed by the Democrat-controlled Legislature in 2021.
- **I-2117** would repeal the state’s costly climate policy that was enacted by majority Democrats in 2021 and took full effect early last year.
- **I-2124** would allow individuals to opt out of the mandatory payroll tax for the state-run long-term care program called “WA Cares.”

PADDEN BILLS PASSED BY LEGISLATURE



Senator Padden confers with 13th District Senator Judy Warnick of Moses Lake.

The Legislature this session approved several bills that I introduced either this year or last year. All of them had been signed or were being considered by Governor Inslee when this newsletter went to print.

SB 5792 – Would exclude buildings with 12 or fewer units that are no more than three stories high from the definition of “multi-unit residential building” if one story is utilized for above- or below-ground parking or retail space. This bill builds on my condo-construction measure from 2023 (SB 5058, signed into law), which is aimed at creating more housing options for Washington’s middle class. Condominiums provide an affordable path to homeownership for first-time homebuyers. **Signed by the governor.**

SB 5840 – Under this proposal, certain leases would not require acknowledgement, witnesses or seals. **Signed by the governor.**

SB 5920 – Would allow more psychiatric beds in our state. It specifically would reinstate authority for the Department of Health until 2028 to grant certificate-of-need exemptions related to increasing psychiatric-bed capacity by allowing additional psychiatric beds.

SB 5934 – Would promote the use of pollinator-friendly shrubs or bushes in landscaping. Pollinators, including bees and butterflies, play a very important role in the pollination of crops, contributing to the production of fruits, vegetables and nuts. Taking steps to protect and enhance pollinators helps agriculture. Mount Spokane High School senior Julia Costello approached me this past fall about sponsoring the bill. Julia is a Girl Scout working to finish requirements to earn the Gold Award, which is equivalent to earning the Eagle Scout award. One of Julia’s Gold Award requirements is working with a legislator on sponsoring a bill. It has been an honor to work with her.

LEGISLATURE KEEPS PADDEN POLICY IN BILL TO COMBAT IMPAIRED DRIVING

At a time when traffic deaths in Washington have reached their highest point in over 30 years, the Legislature took a major step toward addressing this serious problem by passing House Bill 1493, which would combat impaired driving.

This bill includes language from SB 5032, a measure I introduced that would expand the period for reviewing prior convictions of impaired driving to 15 years, from the 10 years now in state law, when determining whether a new offense of impaired driving is charged as a felony. The policy language from SB 5032 now part of HB 1493 also would increase the penalty to a felony offense, rather than a gross misdemeanor, for any person who has three or more prior DUI offenses within that “lookback” period.

Many traffic fatalities in the state involve drivers who have had as many as eight DUI offenses, but the current 10-year lookback period is not long enough to allow the state to impose stronger punishment against such offenders.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET INCLUDES 4TH DISTRICT PROJECTS



This year’s state supplemental transportation budget approved by the Legislature provides funding for several projects in the 4th District:

- \$24 million for improvements to Interstate 90 improvements to interchanges and nearby roads.
- \$10.4 million for Spokane Transit Authority’s Argonne Station park-and-ride.
- \$10.348 million for corridor design work on an Interstate 90 project between Sullivan Road and the Idaho state line.
- Final state portion for the completed Barker Road/Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad grade separation project.
- \$6 million for the Bigelow Gulch/Forker Road realignment project.
- \$5.8 million for the Millwood Trail project from Spokane Community College to Fancher Road.

OPERATING BUDGET FUNDS TRAINING FOR CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

The state supplemental operating budget passed by the Legislature provides funding to expand the state Corrections Academy so it can add additional classes. I’m working with state officials so that part of that funding can provide training classes at the new Spokane County Sheriff-Air Force Regional Training Center.

SENATE HONORS FORMER LEGISLATOR LINDA SMITH



During the session, the Senate approved my floor resolution honoring Linda Smith, a former legislator from southwest Washington who later served in Congress. Since leaving politics, Linda started Shared Hope International, an organization that seeks to prevent child-sex trafficking throughout the world. Linda is still very involved with this organization.