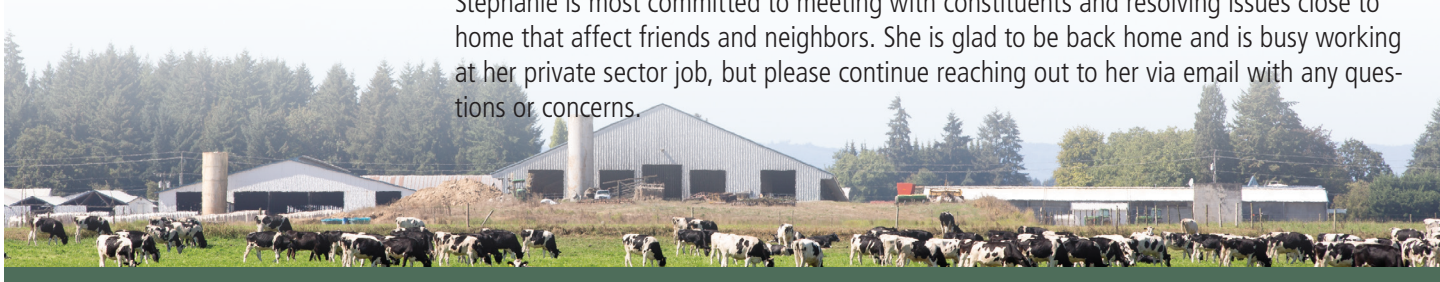
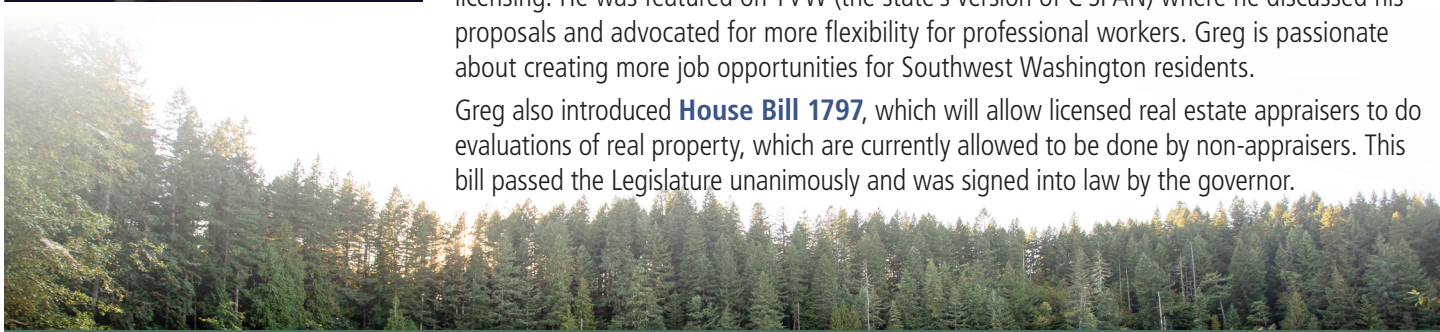


18TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE REPORT



ADDRESSING THE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE
Rep. Greg Cheney (R)
18TH DISTRICT, BATTLE GROUND



REP. Greg Cheney

As a longtime resident of Battle Ground and an attorney focusing on helping small businesses and providing indigent representation, Rep. Cheney hit the ground running in his first year in Olympia. His work on the House Capital Budget Committee helped ensure much-needed local infrastructure projects in Southwest Washington were funded.

In addition, his legal insight helped in final negotiations on several key public-safety bills. His hard work earned him a rare appointment as a freshman lawmaker to be the assistant ranking member on the House State Government and Tribal Relations Committee.

Greg sponsored legislation to crack down on catalytic-converter theft, which has skyrocketed in recent years, especially in border communities. While this legislation (**House Bill 1840**) didn't pass, he will continue to work with stakeholders and lawmakers on this issue throughout the year and will push for his common-sense solution again next session.

He also introduced legislation to increase workforce opportunities by reforming professional licensing. He was featured on TVW (the state's version of C-SPAN) where he discussed his proposals and advocated for more flexibility for professional workers. Greg is passionate about creating more job opportunities for Southwest Washington residents.

Greg also introduced **House Bill 1797**, which will allow licensed real estate appraisers to do evaluations of real property, which are currently allowed to be done by non-appraisers. This bill passed the Legislature unanimously and was signed into law by the governor.

REP. Stephanie McClintock

Rep. McClintock spent her first legislative session focused on getting up to speed on her assigned committees and focusing on the concerns of her district. As the assistant ranking member on the House Consumer Protection and Business Committee, she sponsored her first bill: **House Bill 1301**, which was recently signed into law by the governor. This bill requires the DOL to review 10% of their professional licenses annually and report to the Legislature any areas to streamline for more efficient use of tax dollars and better serve their customers.

Stephanie was also recently promoted to assistant ranking member on the House Capital Budget Committee after serving as a member of this committee last session. The Capital Budget committee is responsible for funding local infrastructure projects and bringing state dollars back home. She also serves as a member of the House K-12 Education Committee which ties in with her experience as a past school board member.

For next session, Stephanie is looking forward to working on the many, key financial decisions that play such a vital role in funding our state's infrastructure. She will continue to dive into the issues in her committees as well as the top issues in district like crime, homelessness, and high taxes.

Stephanie is most committed to meeting with constituents and resolving issues close to home that affect friends and neighbors. She is glad to be back home and is busy working at her private sector job, but please continue reaching out to her via email with any questions or concerns.



REPRESENTATIVE
Greg
Cheney

SENATOR
Ann
Rivers

REPRESENTATIVE
Stephanie
McClintock

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18th District Legislative Report

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• Ways & Means
 (Assistant Republican Leader)
• Capital Budget
• Housing
• Rules

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• Civil Rights & Judiciary
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SENATOR
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REPRESENTATIVE
Greg
Cheney

REPRESENTATIVE
Stephanie
McClintock

18th
District
Legislative
Report

Hello Friends and Neighbors!

We hope this report finds you and your loved ones well. It took the Legislature extra time to complete its work this year because of a fundamental disagreement about how to deal with the most serious issue facing our state – the epidemic of drug use on our streets and in our communities, which is inextricably linked to the homelessness crisis and rise in crime.

Because the differences between legislators could not be settled during the 105 days of the “regular” session, which ended April 23, we were forced back to the Capitol for a May 16 “special” session and vote that put a new drug-possession policy in place. We are happy to now be back in the district until next year’s session.

From the start, some important things were new about this year’s legislative session. The 18th Legislative District boundaries have been adjusted to include different parts of Clark County. It was the first session for Representative McClintock and Representative Cheney. For Senator Rivers, it was the first session since 2020 that was conducted in person.

There were many important topics on the table as well. We knew we would need to produce a new state operating budget, a new state capital budget, and a new state transportation budget, all for the 2023-25 fiscal cycle.

We wanted discussion about the operating budget to include honest consideration of tax relief and recovery from K-12 learning loss. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

Additionally, we saw proposals from both Republicans and Democrats on public safety, beyond the drug crisis. These pieces of legislation highlighted differences in thinking between the two sides of the political aisle. The issue of housing also received more attention than usual. We are hopeful our colleagues in the majority are starting to understand the law of supply and demand.

Unfortunately, the list of bills introduced this year included majority proposals that have us very concerned. They affect key issues like voting, the cost of rental housing and new homes, free speech, parental rights and much more. Some of them passed, to our dismay, while the rest will remain alive for consideration in our next session.

Please keep reading for our assessment of the 2023 legislative session. If you have questions or concerns to share with us, please call, send an email, or write a letter, using the contact information on this page.

As your state legislators, we are still working hard for you even when the Legislature is not in session. Thanks for allowing us to serve you.

Sincerely,

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Rep. Greg Cheney
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Rep. Stephanie McClintock
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2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Legislature addresses major public-safety concerns, with mixed results

Two critical public-safety issues have been hanging over our state since the 2021 legislative session. Legislators dealt with both this session, but we are not completely satisfied with the outcomes.

The first involves vehicular pursuits by law-enforcement officers. Two years ago, our majority colleagues basically prohibited most pursuits unless an officer actually witnessed a crime taking place. The only exceptions were DUI and a small number of violent crimes. It’s no wonder the number of vehicle thefts and other property crimes (like stealing catalytic converters) have soared since then – there was no threat of being pursued to deter criminals.

A bill that would have largely restored the ability of officers to pursue came very close to passing in 2022 but was derailed at the last minute by a fringe faction of legislators. We saw the same kind of opposition this year, unfortunately, despite the spike in auto thefts and related crimes. In the end, the only legislation that could get through (**Senate Bill 5352**) adds a few more crimes to the list but does not go as far as we wanted. The pursuit issue needs to be a priority again in 2024.

The Blake ‘fix’

The second issue is much more significant, because it affects so many more lives in our state – and that’s the reform of Washington’s drug-possession law.

The law was changed in 2021 in response to what’s known as the Blake ruling, from the state Supreme Court. It found Washington’s felony drug-possession law to be unconstitutional. Rather than fix the wording in that law to resolve the issue identified by the court, a majority of legislators supported a new approach. The theory was that by referring drug offenders to treatment instead of charging them with a crime – and even then, it was only a misdemeanor rather than a felony – they would follow through with treatment.

In practice, that didn’t happen. As a result, drug overdoses have become the leading cause of death for Washington residents under 60, and homelessness has increased in our state while diminishing in most other states.

Fortunately, this weaker law contained an expiration date – July of this year – that would force the Legislature to revisit the issue. Unfortunately, our regular 105-day session ended April 23 without an agreement on a replacement law.

It took a one-day “special” session May 16 to put in place a new policy that still leans toward encouraging treatment, rather than incarceration, but increases the penalty to a gross misdemeanor. This gives law-enforcement officers and prosecutors a better forcing function for getting addicts to both enter and complete the treatment that will hopefully help them reclaim their lives.

There are still concerns about the approach to treatment in jails and prisons – or lack of an approach, to be more accurate. That’s one of the aspects we will be watching as the new law takes hold.



Majority party fails to deter violent crime

Several bills were passed this session by lawmakers who seem less interested in holding criminals accountable for the violence they cause in our communities and more focused on restricting the right of people to defend themselves.

Even in light of increases in property theft, violent crime, and auto theft, the majority party in our state continued its reluctance to pass policies to help keep our families and communities safe. In fact, this session we voted against several bills that would negatively impact public safety:

- We voted *against* reducing sentence enhancements for drug dealing in school zones.
- We voted *against* reducing sentence enhancements for violent crimes committed with a firearm.
- We voted *against* reducing sentences for gang-related crimes.
- We voted *against* a proposal to ignore a violent juvenile’s criminal history if they later commit violent crime as an adult.

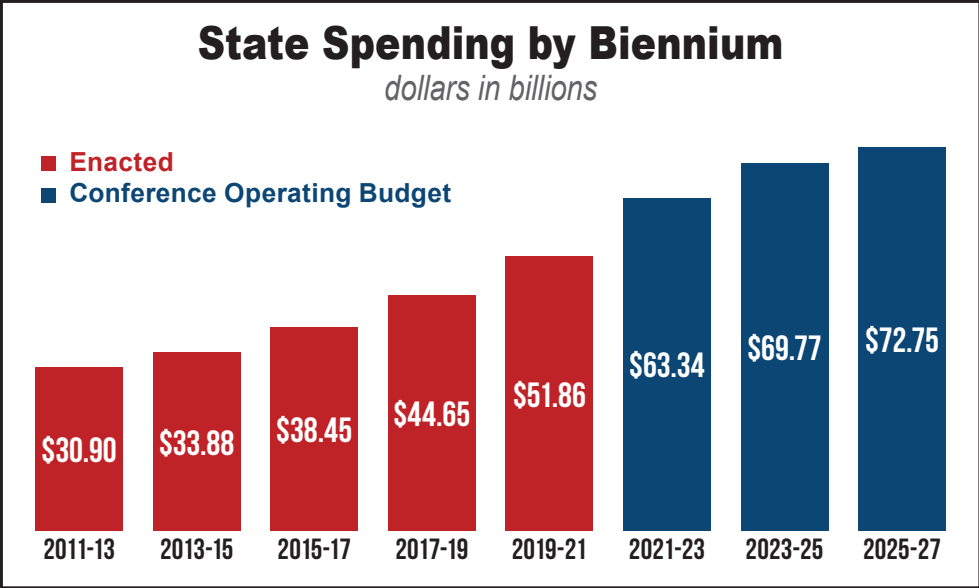
We did not support these efforts because, to put it simply, none will make Washingtonians safer. And, while the majority party was proposing legislation and amendments that will compromise the safety of our communities, they also passed legislation to ban certain firearms from law-abiding citizens.

2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Has your family budget doubled over the past 10 years?

The new operating budget passed this session, which took effect July 1, will spend nearly \$70 billion during the 2023-25 fiscal cycle.

While the increase in spending from the previous budget is less than half of what we’ve seen in the past few budgets – which is encouraging – the fact remains that spending is still up by 9%. Looking over just the past 10 years, state spending has more than doubled.



How many families can say either of those things about their own budgets? The people of our state continue to struggle with record-high inflation, high food, fuel and energy costs. The same is true for small businesses, which face the added hindrance of government overregulation.

This new budget (**Senate Bill 5187**) includes some things we support – as any budget spending nearly \$70 billion should – but it also leaves too little in reserves, especially with the state’s chief economist predicting a slowing of Washington’s economy. The combination of declining revenue and inadequate reserves sets our people up for a future

of large tax increases to continue the entitlement programs contained in the budget.

Also on our minds, besides the Democrats’ long-term care tax that is biting into paychecks, is the governor’s cap-and-tax plan. Since taking full effect this year, it has functioned like a regressive tax to push the price of gas in our state up to the highest in the nation, yet is doing nothing to improve our roads.

Even worse, this budget missed opportunities to offer meaningful tax relief, especially property-tax relief. With state tax collections at record highs and financial pressures hitting individuals and families from all sides, we believe now was the time to give some back to hardworking taxpayers.

Why is more money being deducted from my paycheck?



Most workers in Washington have started to see the new long-term care tax take a bite out of their paychecks. The current rate is \$0.58 per \$100 earned, equal to \$435 annually for someone paid \$75,000 annually.

This tax was approved by the majority during the 2019 session, with collection to begin in 2022. Then people began realizing that the benefit offered through the “WA Cares” program is not portable and tops out at \$36,500, depending on how long someone pays the tax. The resulting outrage and controversy led the majority to delay the payroll deduction by 18 months, saying it would look at making adjustments. But no such changes were adopted during this year’s session.

While we understand the appeal of having long-term care coverage, government isn’t good at managing big programs like this – and shouldn’t be in this line of business in the first place, because it is in direct competition with the private market. People should be free to shop for a policy that fits their needs. Instead, they are getting hit with what functions like yet another regressive tax.

Visit HouseRepublicans.wa.gov/Repeal-LTC for more information about the LTC program, and WACaresFund.wa.gov/private-insurance for information about the few exemptions possible.

2023 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Significant wins for 18th District in transportation budget

The Legislature also passed the 2023-25 transportation budget, which spends a total of about \$13.5 billion, including \$4.6 billion for highway improvements throughout the state. Of that, \$275 million is designated for the new I-5 bridge over the Columbia River (language in the bill indicates an intent to commit \$1 billion; Oregon lawmakers recently voted for a similar state match).

Overall, this budget includes \$35.6 million in new funding for transportation projects in the 18th District, including additional money that brings the total amount for the 179th interchange replacement project in Clark County to about \$87 million between now and the end of the project. The original request was for \$50 million. We asked for an additional \$30 million and ended up with about \$87 million.

This funding was not in the original Senate version of the bill, so we’re grateful to the members of the House and Senate transportation committees for fighting to get this included. Our district needs this important project to move forward. We will also still receive \$81.7 million for the State Route 502/Interstate-5 to Battle Ground corridor improvements that were part of the prior budget.

Capital budget includes critical funding for important local projects

The capital budget, **Senate Bill 5200**, also contains some good news for the 18th District. The \$8.98 billion spending plan is essentially our state’s construction budget that focuses on local and regional infrastructure projects. It is mostly funded by bonds issued by the state. Additionally, this budget makes significant investments statewide in housing, behavioral health, and K-12 schools, including \$30.4 million for local projects in the 18th. Here are some of the projects receiving funding in our district:

- \$1.365 million for the Kline Bridge and ADA improvements.
- \$1.288 million for increased drinking water storage for Battle Ground’s reservoir.
- \$1 million for Eaton Urban Pathway Project.
- \$20.6 million for a state-owned and operated community mental health 48-bed facility.
- \$5.5 million for Lower East Fork Floodplain Reclamation project (shared with the 20th District).
- \$500,000 for Wallace Heights Septic Elimination Program.

This budget is an example of the great things we can do when both sides come together and work for the good of all Washingtonians.



SEN. Ann Rivers

This year, Sen. Rivers added a new leadership role to her already diverse legislative resume: assistant Republican leader on the state’s capital budget. The new assignment leverages her extensive service on the Senate Ways and Means Committee, which handles the operating and capital budgets as well as tax and spending bills; her well-deserved reputation for working across the political aisle; and experience from her “day job” as Community and Economic Development director for the City of Longview.

Sen. Rivers, a longtime La Center resident, understands that what benefits one part of Clark County is usually good for the rest of the county, and how the same goes for Southwest Washington as a region. She took that thinking into her work on the capital budget, prioritizing investments with broader, regional benefit rather focusing at the familiar legislative-district level.

While she is a teacher by training, and was instrumental in reforming Washington’s K-12 funding system in the years following the landmark McCleary court ruling, Ann also has a special passion for health care. As a longtime member and former chair of the Senate health-care committee, her focus has included: finding policy answers to the opioid epidemic; improving access to medical and dental services in rural and underserved areas; and working to gain better control of health-care costs.

This session, for instance, she again introduced legislation (**Senate Bill 5445**) to reduce the cost of prescription medication – and while it stalled, three other Rivers proposals passed. The laws created by her **Senate Bill 5569** and **Senate Bill 5163** will, respectively, improve access to kidney-disease treatment and go after Medicaid fraud. Six years after first introducing legislation to increase cultural diversity in the clinical trials that produce medications and medical devices, she saw her **Senate Bill 5388** policy win unanimous support from the Legislature.

