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68th Legislature Returns to Olympia January 9th

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After two years of remote legislative sessions, all 147 legislators will return to Olympia January 9th to begin a 105-day session where the main bit of business is passing two-year spending plans for operations, construction, and transportation. All the rest is just gravy.

Legislators aren't wasting any time beginning to propose policy changes, however. Even newly elected members are allowed to "pre-file" a bill that will be introduced on Day 1 and is already assigned a bill number. As of last Friday, beyond operational bills, 193 bills had been pre-filed in the House and 214 had been pre-filed in the Senate. Following the swearing-in ceremonies in both chambers, election of a House Speaker, and other pomp and circumstance, the bills will be read into the record and assigned to a committee.

Usually the first week of odd-numbered years in committees is spent with work sessions to familiarize new members about committee protocols, offer insight into state agencies or issues that will be in front of the committee that session, and take public testimony on Governor Jay Inslee's 2023-25 proposed budgets. This year, several committees will kick off the first week with public hearings on some of the pre-filed bills.

Committees in the House and the Senate will allow for in-person and remote testimony, along with the opportunity to electronically state a position on a bill and provide written testimony into the record.

What to expect in 2023

In what is described as the "long session," legislators will have until April 23 to take care of business. Along the way, self-imposed deadlines for bill consideration will keep the process moving. With a long session also comes a long lead time for consideration of policy bills – the first cutoff for bills to move out of policy committees is Friday, February 17th. This session, legislators will allow a full week of consideration in fiscal committees before dropping the hammer on many a good idea. Action then will turn to the floor, with the chamber cutoff scheduled for March 8th.

While legislators are in person, changes have been proposed to manage public visits with legislators. For the House O'Brien Building and the Senate Cherberg Building, visitors and lobbyists meeting with legislators will need to check into security desks on various floors and make sure they have a scheduled appointment before being escorted back to the legislators' offices. It is unclear how this will work in the Legislative Building on the 1st floor, where some House Democratic and Republican

members have their offices. Visits to legislators on the 4th floor of the Legislative Building in both the House and Senate will continue the protocol of checking in with a security person before being admitted. Guidance hasn't been issued yet about access to Senate Republicans who are in a temporary modular building while a new office space is being built. Getting in and out of meetings is expected to take a little longer, so it will be important to build in adequate travel and check-in time.

As mentioned above, committees will try a version of allowing in-person and remote testimony. It isn't clear yet how individual chairs will maneuver or balance this and, as always, testifying isn't guaranteed due to committee time constraints. With the exception of the budget committees taking testimony on the Governor's proposed budgets and on legislator proposed budgets (out in March), most committees are limited to two hours.

You can participate in committee meetings in four different ways, but all use the same House or Senate committee sign-in portal. Options include:

- Sign up to testify in person;
- Sign up to testify remotely;
- State your position for the Record of Pro, Con, or Other;
- Submit written testimony which should be shared with committee members and become part of the official record on the bill.

As with previous sessions, who testifies and how long will be allowed is up to the Committee Chair. The average is about two minutes, although individuals signed up to testify should plan a 90-second and a 60-second version just in case.

- Here is the [Senate Committee portal](#)
- Here is the [House Committee portal](#)

When an individual signs up to testify remotely, a unique participation link will be generated and show on the sign-up page; the link also will be sent to the email address provided when you register.

As in the past, all committee meetings will be televised by [TVW](#) and can be found on the day of at or in the TVW archives.

A couple of other things to keep in mind:

- The portal for signing up to testify on a bill will **close one hour prior** to the start of the hearing.
- Submitting written testimony through the portal is allowed **up to 24 hours after** the public hearing.

It's all about the money

Governor Jay Inslee submitted 2023-25 proposed budgets December 14, 2022. In announcing his proposals, Inslee stressed the need to address affordable housing and homelessness as a top priority. In addition, the state's new Climate cap and invest auction begins in February, and some seriously big

revenues are anticipated. In fact, the Governor proposes funding many priorities and projects in all three of his budgets using the expected Climate Commitment Act money.

For **education**, the Governor proposed lifting the cap on special education, from 13.5% to 15%, for an additional \$75 million a biennium. The operating budget proposal also included \$5 million each fiscal year for professional development for inclusionary practices.

In addition to these policy changes, here’s a high-level look at his budget proposals:

2023-25 Governor-Proposed Operating Budget		
\$351.8 million	COLAS for educators	Proposes a 4.5% increase for the 2023-24 SY; 2.0% increase for the 2024-25 SY
\$63.5 million	Residential Outdoor School	Increases the amounts from last biennium
\$60 million	Fully fund Community Eligibility Program food assistance for kids	
\$31 million	Safety Net	Increases the amounts in the safety net program
\$16 million	Future Teacher Residencies	Starting in the 2024-25 school year
\$11.2 million	Mastery-Based Learning pilots	Expands the total amount to this level
\$10 million	Next Generation Science Standards	\$5 million per fiscal year for professional development, including climate science standards.
\$6.7 million	Language Access	Funding is provided to help implement HB 1153, passed in the 2022 session.
\$2 million	Beginning Educator Support Team	Increases the amount by \$2 million
\$1 million	Recruiting Washington Teachers	Increases the program to expand into areas of the state where a program doesn’t exist

2023-25 Governor-Proposed Capital Budget		
\$613.8 million	School Construction Assistance Program	Supports construction projects in the queue at OSPI

\$42.4 million	Small District Modernization Grants	\$40 million for projects, \$2.4 million for planning grants
\$40 million	Seismic retrofits	Continues the investment from last session
\$24.3 million	Health & Safety Grants	\$5 million for emergency repairs; \$12 million for nonrecurring urgent small repair projects; \$7.3 million for ADA compliance projects.
\$14.5 million	Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools	Recreation and nutrition-related grants
\$6 million	Career Prep	To support career-connected learning and CTE equipment needs
\$5 million	Energy Assessment grants	To support compliance with previously adopted “clean, green buildings” laws

The Governor’s budget office is hosting information about the proposed 2023-25 budgets [here](#). Find highlights, broken down by topic, of the Governor’s proposals [here](#). In addition, Governor Inslee also has many policy briefs and budget charts, which can also be found on the [Highlights](#) page on his priorities for 2023.

New faces

Typically, sessions following an even-year general election result in quite a few changes and this year is no exception. All 98 House members must run every two years, and half of the 49 Senators are up for re-election every two years. In November, House and Senate Democrats flipped what had been a Republican seat and expanded their majorities to 58-40 and 29-20, respectively.

In addition, the House has 23 new members, and the Senate is welcoming seven new members. In the House, two former representatives reclaimed a seat in their district. In the Senate, five House members successfully ran for the upper chamber, one is a former senator, and one is completely new.

New members who have been sworn in or will be sworn in on January 9th include:

Representative-Elect members:

- [Suzanne Schmidt](#), R-Spokane Valley, 4th legislative district
- [Leonard Christian](#), R-Spokane Valley, 4th legislative district
- [Stephanie Barnard](#), R-Pasco, 8th legislative district
- [April Connors](#), R-Kennewick, 8th legislative district
- [Clyde Shavers](#), D-South Whidbey Island, 10th legislative district

- [Bryan Sandlin](#), R-Zillah, 15th legislative district
- [Kevin Waters](#), R-Skamania County, 17th legislative district
- [Stephanie McClintock](#), R-Vancouver, 18th legislative district
- [Greg Cheney](#), R-Battle Ground, 18th legislative district
- [Beth Doglio](#), D-Olympia, 22nd legislative district
- [Spencer Hutchins](#), R-Gig Harbor, 26th legislative district
- [Sharlett Mena](#), D-Tacoma, 29th legislative district
- [Kristine Reeves](#), D-Federal Way, 30th legislative district
- [Emily Alvarado](#), D-Seattle, 34th legislative district
- [Travis Couture](#), R-Mason County, 35th legislative district
- [Julia Reed](#), D-Seattle, 36th legislative district
- [Chipalo Street](#), D-Seattle, 37th legislative district
- [Julio Cortez](#), D-Everett, 38th legislative district
- [Mary Fosse](#), D-Everett, 38th legislative district
- [Sam Low](#), R-Lake Stevens, 39th legislative district
- [Joe Timmons](#), D-Bellingham, 42nd legislative district
- [Darya Farivar](#), D-Seattle, 46th legislative district
- [Chris Stearns](#), D-Auburn, 47th legislative district

Senator-elect members:

- [Rep. Matt Boehnke](#), R-Kennewick, 8th legislative district
- [Nikki Torres](#), R-Pasco, 15th legislative district
- [Rep. Drew MacEwen](#), R-Mason County, 35th legislative district
- [Rep. Noel Frame](#), D-Seattle, 36th legislative district
- [Rep. Sharon Shewmake](#), D-Bellingham, 42nd legislative district
- [Rep. Javier Valdez](#), D-Seattle, 46th legislative district
- [Claudia Kauffman](#), D-Kent, 47th legislative district

Member rosters, including their legislative assistants and office information, along with updated committee member and staff lists are expected to be posted January 9th.

Legislators Look ahead

On January 5, House and Senate leadership, budget writers and Governor Jay Inslee provided a legislative preview. The TVW video can be found [here](#) (run time 2 hours, 45 minutes).

The event kicked off with a 27-minute presentation by pollster Stuart Elway, director of the Crosscut/Elway Poll, sharing information from a survey conducted at the end of December. This was followed by about 30 minutes from Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, D-Spokane, (expected) Speaker of the House Laurie Jinkins,

D-Tacoma, Senate Republican Leader John Braun, R-Centralia, and House Republican Leader J.T. Wilcox, R-Yelm. Budget writers for both chambers and parties took the stage then for another 45 minutes. Democratic Governor Jay Inslee batted cleanup for nearly the last hour of this preview.

On Monday, January 9 at 10 AM, OSPI's Superintendent Chris Reykdal will provide an annual update on the state of Washington's K-12 students, educators, and schools. Topics will include updates on learning recovery, education funding, student enrollment rates, Class of 2022 graduation rates, and more. The event will be [livestreamed on TVW](#). Use that link to watch the briefing if you miss the live version.

The Week Ahead

As mentioned previously, many committees will hold work sessions during the first week of session. Here's a quick snapshot of what's on the schedule for Week 1:

Ways & Means (Senate) - SHR 4 and Virtual JACB - 1/10 @ 4:00pm

- [SB 5187](#) - Public Hearing - Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating appropriations. (If measure is referred to committee.)

Higher Education & Workforce Development (Senate) - SHR 2 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 1/11 @ 8:00am

- [SB 5048](#) - Public Hearing - Eliminating college in the high school fees. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Appropriations (House) - HHR A and Virtual JLOB - 1/11 @ 4:00pm

- [HB 1140](#) - Public Hearing - Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating appropriations. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Environment & Energy (House) - HHR C and Virtual JLOB - 1/12 @ 8:00am

- [HB 1170](#) - Public Hearing - Improving climate resilience through updates to the state's integrated climate response strategy. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Capital Budget (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 1/12 @ 1:30pm

- [HB 1147](#) - Public Hearing - Concerning the capital budget. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

- [HB 1148](#) - Public Hearing - Concerning state general obligation bonds and related accounts. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Early Learning & K-12 Education (Senate) - SHR 1 and Virtual J.A. Cherberg - 1/12 @ 1:30pm

- [SB 5174](#) - Public Hearing - Providing adequate and predictable student transportation. (Hearing is on the Proposed Substitute.) (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Ways & Means (Senate) - SHR 4 and Virtual JACB - 1/12 @ 4:00pm

- [SB 5200](#) - Public Hearing - Concerning the capital budget. (If measure is referred to committee.)
- [SB 5201](#) - Public Hearing - Concerning state general obligation bonds and related accounts. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

Postsecondary Education & Workforce (House) - HHR B and Virtual JLOB - 1/13 @ 8:00am

- [HB 1069](#) - Public Hearing - Adopting the mental health counselor compact. (Remote Testimony Available). (If measure is referred to committee.)

In addition to these public hearings, the House Education Committee will hold work sessions on the following days and topics:

- Tuesday, January 10 @ 4 PM: K-12 System Overview
- Thursday, January 12 @ 8 AM: Education Impacts and Implications: COVID-19 and McCleary, et al. v. State of Washington