



SUBJECT: State Legislative Update

DATE: June 26, 2023

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Genesee Adkins, Chief of External Affairs, 452-7849
Briahna Murray, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Government Relations

SUBJECT: State Legislative Update

June State Legislative Summary

Notable Political Announcements

Minor Shifts in the Legislature for 2024 Session

Since the 2023 session adjourned, legislators have made some notable moves. Typically, there are very few changes to the membership or organizational structure of the Legislature mid-biennium. However, this year some minor shifts are having a domino effect involving key positions.

Most notable and impactful for the 2024 legislative session, chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and lead operating budget writer, **Sen. Christine Rolfes** (D-23 Legislative District (LD)), was appointed to serve as a Kitsap County Commissioner. She will resign from the legislature, and the Kitsap County Commissioners are likely to appoint **Rep. Drew Hansen** (D-23 LD) to the senate seat. While the current vice chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, **Sen. June Robinson** (D-38 LD), is presumed to become chair of the committee, there are rumors that other members of the caucus are interested in the role. Regardless, the Senate Democratic Caucus will appoint an additional Democrat to fill out the membership of the committee. Rep. Drew Hansen serves as chair of the House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee. If he gets appointed to the senate as anticipated, a new chair for the committee will be selected. The Kitsap County Commissioners will appoint a new legislator to Rep. Hansen's current seat prior to the beginning of the 2024 session.

Another potential change on the horizon for the 2024 session is in Whatcom County's Legislative District 42. **Rep. Alicia Rule** (D-42 LD) has announced that she is running against an incumbent for Whatcom County Executive. If she is successful in winning the race, the Whatcom County Council will appoint a new member to serve in the legislature.

Candidates Emerge for the November 2024 Governor's Race

Washington State's current governor, Jay Inslee, has announced he is not running for re-election. His term ends December 31, 2024, and his successor will be elected in the November 2024 general election. Several candidates have announced, and many others are forthcoming. The field of candidates will be narrowed to the top two candidates in the August 2024 primary.

Below is a brief list of the top candidates that have been announced to date.



- Bob Ferguson, a Democrat and current Attorney General
- Hilary Franz, a Democrat and current Public Lands Commissioner
- Mark Mullet, a Democrat and current State Senator for LD 5
- Raul Garcia, a Republican from Yakima who is a physician and an immigrant from Cuba
- Semi Bird, a Republican from the Tri-Cities and former school board director

Announcements Impacting the 2025 Legislature

From biennium to biennium, it has become increasingly common for members of the legislature to have significant turnover. Early signs indicate that 2025 will continue that trend of significant change. With half the members of the senate ([click here](#) to view senate terms) and all members of the house up for re-election in November 2024, the 2025 Legislature is bound to look a bit different than the current Legislature. Many legislators are already making announcements regarding their intentions to run for office.

- **Sen. Mark Mullet** (D-5 LD) has announced he is running for governor rather than seeking re-election to his senate seat. Sen. Mullet's current more progressive seatmate, **Rep. Bill Ramos** (D-5 LD), has announced he will run for the senate seat. No opponent has yet filed to run against him. This will leave an open house seat in District 5, where a new member of the legislature will be elected.
- **Sen. Patty Kuderer** (D-48 LD) has announced she is running for Insurance Commissioner. Her senate term does not end until January 2027. If she fails to win her election, she will return to the senate. If she prevails, the King County Council will appoint someone to fill her senate seat, which could include either of her seatmates: **Rep. Amy Walen** (D-48 LD) or **Rep. Vandana Slatter** (D-48 LD).
- **Sen. Manka Dhingra** (D-45 LD) has announced she is running for attorney general. Her senate term does not end until January 2027. If she fails to win her election, she will return to the senate. If she prevails, the King County Council will appoint someone to fill her senate seat, which could include either of her two seatmates: **Rep. Roger Goodman** (D-45 LD) or **Rep. Larry Springer** (D-45 LD).
- **Sen. Kevin Van De Wege** (D-24 LD) has announced he will run for public lands commissioner rather than seeking re-election to his senate seat (the position currently held by and being vacated by Hilary Franz, who is running for governor). **Rep. Mike Chapman** (D-24 LD), his moderate Democrat seatmate, will likely run for the senate seat, leaving an open house seat for a new member to seek. Rep. Mike Chapman currently serves as chair of the house Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, which would open up the chair position in 2025.

High-level Takeaway: The departure of Sen. Mark Mullet and Sen. Kevin Van De Wege from the senate in 2025 is noteworthy. As moderate Democrats, these two members have often pushed the Senate Democratic Caucus toward the center. Even if equally moderate Rep. Mike Chapman takes Sen. Van De Wege's seat, there will likely be one fewer moderate member within the Senate Democratic Caucus. This could signal that the relatively moderate senate may not be pulled as much toward the center as in recent years.



Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Activities

The [AWC Legislative Priorities Committee](#) has begun meeting to develop the Association's 2024 legislative agenda. Emerging themes include fiscal issues such as increasing the 1 percent property tax cap and authorizing a real estate excise tax (REET) III for housing, refining public safety policies around possession of controlled substances and vehicular pursuits, and continuing to engage in discussions around transit-oriented development.

The AWC Conference is being held June 20-23 in Spokane. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson will attend on behalf of Bellevue and will be joined by Lacey Jane Wolfe, Assistant Director of Intergovernmental Relations. GTH-Gov is an event sponsor and is also planning to attend.

In case you missed it, AWC produced some helpful webinars that are available on their website:

- [AWC's Legislative Wrap-Up Webinar](#)
- AWC/WAPA Webinar on *Blake* (occurred 6/6 and will be posted at [this link](#)).

Upcoming Legislative Activities

During the legislative interim, committees often hold work sessions on topics likely to be discussed during the 2024 legislative session. Below are upcoming legislative committee meetings scheduled:

- [6/20: Joint Transportation Committee](#) will be meeting in Spokane in conjunction with the AWC conference to discuss electric vehicle incentives for high consumption fuel users, city transportation equity, and the committee's work plan schedule for 2023.
- [6/27: House Postsecondary Education & Workforce Committee](#) will be meeting virtually to discuss automation and the future of the workforce and vocational education and apprenticeships vis-a-vis college.
- [7/13: Senate Labor & Commerce Committee](#) will be meeting in Olympia to hear updates from the Department of Labor & Industries on prevailing wage, apprenticeship utilization, and workers' compensation return to work.
- [7/26: Senate Housing Committee](#) will be meeting in Vancouver, Washington to discuss expanding housing accessibility and stability.
- [7/27: House Local Government Committee](#) will be meeting in Olympia to discuss Growth Management Act planning from the local government perspective.

2024 Legislative Session

The next session will be here before we know it. The 2024 Legislative Session begins on January 8, 2024, and is scheduled to last for 60 consecutive days. All bills introduced during the 2023 session that did not pass will be automatically reintroduced in the 2024 session.