



# TWIO

*This Week In Olympia*

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**January 17, 2025**



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## About TWIO

*This Week in Olympia (TWIO)* is published by WASA in support of our members and members of our partners in WASBO, WSPA, and AEA.

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## 2025 Session Launches

On Monday, January 13, the 69th Washington State Legislature convened its 2025 Regular Session. This first year of a two-year biennial session is known as the “long” session and is limited to 105 days. As discussed earlier this week in the TWIO “[Opening Day Special Edition](#),” the main focus for legislators will be to adopt a 2025–27 Operating Budget—in the midst of a significant revenue shortfall—along with a 2025–27 Capital Construction Budget, and a 2025–27 Transportation Budget.

Of course, there will be a plethora of policy bills to address as well. Legislators prefiled over 300 bills before this session even began and, along with another 340 bills introduced this week (through yesterday), legislators already have well-over 600 bills to address. And the flood of legislation has just begun. If history holds, we can expect another 1,000-plus bills coming in the next 14 weeks. The current bills cover every aspect of government that you can imagine and many focus on K–12 education. WASA’s [Bill Watch](#) already includes over 100 bills that have direct or potential indirect impacts on schools, school districts, students, or staff.

While each session is always crazy with bill activity, we do have a small bit of hope about the number of bills, particularly new policies, around K–12 education. Representative Sharon Santos (Seattle), Chair of the House Education Committee, spoke at this past weekend’s WASA/WSSDA/WASBO Legislative Conference and she stated that she would be limiting the number of bills that would be acted upon in her committee. This is only one Chair of one committee; however, if she holds to her word, the time and energy we have to spend supporting—and more often opposing—new programs, policies, and mandates will be less than normal. Only time will tell if this becomes a reality.

Traditionally, the first week of a new session is full of ceremony and most legislative committees spend their time getting grounded on the issues before them. Work sessions fill most committee agendas and very little “real” action takes place in the early days of session. Of course, tradition does not always hold. While some legislative committees started slowly with work sessions, others dove right into public hearings this week.

Along with committee activity, there were a series of ceremonial events that took place this week as well. On Monday, both houses officially elected officers for the two bodies. Although both Majority parties (House and Senate) held elections for presiding officers a few months ago, those appointments are not official, as

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the full House or Senate must elect the presiding officers, with the exception of the Lt. Governor—who acts the President of the Senate, but is a publicly elected official. In recent memory, there has not been a presiding officer-elect who has been defeated during the official election in either house, so the action is usually strictly ceremonial (and certainly not as dramatic as the recent election of the Speaker in the US House of Representatives). The House of Representatives elects its Speaker, Speaker Pro Tempore, Chief Clerk, and Sergeant at Arms; the Senate elects the President Pro Tempore, Vice President Pro Tempore, Secretary of the Senate, and Sergeant at Arms.

## **Inslee, Ferguson, Reykdal Address the State**

Another major ceremonial event that occurs at the start of each session is an annual State of the State Address from the governor. On Tuesday, Governor Jay Inslee presented his last [State of the State Address](#). Every year, the governor’s major opportunity to drive the Legislature’s agenda comes with the release of budget proposals and the presentation of a State of the State speech. The governor has no vote in the Legislature (although he holds the power to veto bills), but he can use his “bully pulpit” to push legislators to action. This year, however, with the governor leaving office shortly after he presented his address, the tone was a bit different.

As Governor Inslee moves out of the Governor’s Mansion and back into private life, he used much of his speech to recount activities accomplished rather than focusing on his budget proposals or other major requests. As is normal for this governor, K–12 education was barely mentioned—and when it was discussed, his comments did not necessarily reflect reality. As he walked through his—and the Legislature’s—accomplishments he noted, “Together, we complied with the *McCleary* ruling for funding schools. It took years, but with heroic effort we got it done.” From the Court’s standpoint, as they relinquished jurisdiction in the case, the Legislature did “comply” with the ruling. However, WASA and the rest of the education community would not be pressing the Legislature in 2025 to amply fund basic education, if Inslee and the Legislature truly “got it done.”

Later in his speech, Inslee stated, “We have to go forward on our investments in young people and education, like the work we’ve done to grow more support resources at our schools with social workers, paraeducators, and counselors.” True enough. But if this was a priority, why did he include zero dollars to further enhance the Prototypical School Funding Model in his December Operating Budget request?

After this statement, Inslee mentioned a story of a counselor from Federal Way. Inslee made the bold statement that schools “have enough counselors meeting the recommended ratio to provide more robust, one-on-one counseling to the students who need it most.” In some cases, this may be true, but even so, those same districts likely do not have the necessary resources for the required number of principals, librarians, teaching assistance, office support, or other critical staff. The Legislature has done little to provide for updated and realistic ratios in the Prototypical School Funding Model—and Inslee has done even less.

Following Inslee’s final State of the State Address, as the bitterness of Inslee’s consistent lack of effort to support K–12 education began to wane, his Office released a [press release](#) about the speech. In the middle of the release is a big box recounting all the accomplishments of Inslee and the Legislature. The list includes about 30 activities and buried in the middle is: “Full funding for K–12 in 2018 ended *McCleary* lawsuit.” The Legislature’s so-called *McCleary* “solution” in 2017 and 2018 successfully convinced the Supreme Court to relinquish jurisdiction in the case; however, claiming “full funding” was achieved is a bit of hyperbole. Again, school districts across the state would not be struggling financially, and we would not be aggressively seeking basic education support in this session if the Legislature truly provided full funding of K–12 education.

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On Wednesday, each of the statewide elected officials were sworn-in. The last in line was our new governor, Bob Ferguson. Shortly after being sworn-in, he stepped up to the podium to issue his [Inaugural Address](#). Because he is new to this position—and this was his first official opportunity to introduce himself as governor—much of his speech was focused on family history and history of the state. This is understandable, however, given that his [Budget Priorities](#), released last week, was somewhat thin on details, we were hoping to get a better understanding of his priorities. In the early stages of his speech, he did list a series of “real challenges” he wanted to address. Specifically, he stated he wanted action on: affordability; law enforcement; the ferry system; behavioral health; homelessness and housing costs; cutting down the bureaucracy of state government; and “core freedoms,” including reproductive freedom. At this point, it would have been appropriate—and appreciated—if he noted funding for K–12 education. He declined to do that, even though throughout the campaign he called for the share of the K–12 investment to grow, specifically mentioning education should occupy at least 50 percent of the overall Operating Budget (we currently sit at about 43 percent).

In fact, Ferguson’s only mention of K–12 funding or policy issues was to tout his plan to “ensure that every student attending K–12 public schools receives free breakfast and lunch as a part of their basic education.” Support or oppose, this funding will do nothing to shore up school district budgets as they attempt to provide opportunities for all children to learn and succeed.

Much of Ferguson’s speech touched on themes of bridging partisan divides and pursuing government reform. In focusing on the budget big picture, he said specifically the “era of assuming unrealistic growth in revenue is over,” adding that he “will not sign a budget that requires unrealistic revenue growth to balance.” He also threatened to veto “policy bills that defer major spending obligations more than four years after the legislation is adopted,” noting this violates the spirit of Washington’s four-year balanced budget requirement.

It is clear that Ferguson wants Washington government to be more efficient and save funding wherever possible. And in many ways, he talks like he will take a more realistic and/or conservative approach to spending. In fact, many comments he made (pleasantly) surprised Republicans, including one of his closing comments, when he said, “I’m not here to defend government. I’m here to reform it.” Republicans in the Chamber applauded and cheered, while most Democratic members sat silently. As we have noted many times in these newsletters, often the biggest fights in the Legislature are not between Democrats and Republicans, but House versus Senate or Legislature versus the governor. With Democrats controlling both Chambers and the governor promoting a conservative tone and approach, there soon may be some fireworks.

A third major speech was presented this week. While not a specific legislative activity, much of the focus was on the Legislature. Yesterday, State Superintendent Chris Reykdal provided his (fourth) annual [State of Education Address](#). Again, this was presented outside the legislative arena and is intended to provide details and data about K–12 education in Washington; however, there was a heavy focus about the need for the Legislature to step up to their constitutional obligation to amply fund basic education.

Reykdal started his presentation by saying the troubling financial health of school districts is the “real State of Education,” and acknowledged the serious risk of the Legislature not investing in our schools. He provided details of his request to fully fund the “Big Three” (Special Education, Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation), noting that this funding is “critical for the success of school districts.” He urged legislators to “lean into funding schools.”

Superintendent Reykdal also pitched his support to expand local funding. That is, he expressed the need to lift the local levy lid. He noted that, as part of the *McCleary* “solution” (2017–18), the Legislature “forcibly removed local authority” to raise

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revenue. Of course, levies remained in place, but his point was that the ability for local districts to secure local funding was drastically lowered. He argued that there should be a limit on levies; however, the current system is way too low.

As a side note, we know there will be a heavy discussion about raising the levy lid this session. After all, if legislators balk at providing ample funding for the Big Three because of a significant revenue shortfall, they can still support education by pushing their responsibility onto local voters and local districts—and the move will cost the state exactly zero dollars. We continue to argue that if the Legislature amply funded the Big Three (as they are constitutionally required), there would be less of a need to increase levies. Ample funding of Special Education, MSOC, and Pupil Transportation would provide a significant increase in STATE funding to districts—and, as a bonus, levy funds that are being used to backfill the Legislature’s underfunding of basic education would be freed up to be used as the school board and the community desire. Knowing that some of our members support a levy lid increase, WASA will not oppose the move; however, we are very concerned about exacerbating the current inequity between districts and have emphatically told legislators IF they feel the need to raise the levy lid, a commensurate (at least) increase in Local Effort Assistance (LEA or “levy equalization”) must also happen.

This morning the first shot across the bow came. [HB 1356](#) is a complicated bill that provides adjustments to levy lids, provides additional funding for Local Effort Assistance, adjusts the State Property Tax, allocates additional funding for substitutes, and enhances special education funding. If that is not enough, the bill also would establish a K–12 Funding Equity Work Group to analyze K–12 funding formulas and explore options for revisions that are responsive to student needs.

We will take some time to dive into this comprehensive—and complex—bill; for now however, we will provide a general review. Under current law, levies are capped at \$2.50 per \$1,000 of Assessed Value OR \$2,500 per pupil—whichever is LESS. (Districts with more than 40,000 students have a limit of \$3,000 per pupil.) The per-pupil limit is adjusted annually by inflation (CPI). In addition to the adjustments via inflation, HB 1356 would also provide \$500 “inflation enhancement” in Calendar Year 2026 and 3.33 percentage points added to inflation each year from Calendar Year 2027 to 2030. Beginning with the Calendar Year 2031, the maximum per-pupil limit would be \$5,035, as increased by inflation beginning with property taxes levied for collection in 2032, multiplied by the number of average annual full-time equivalent students enrolled in the school district in the prior school year.

For LEA, the bill would also provide an “inflation enhancement” (in addition to CPI inflation) to the “State Local Effort Assistance Threshold,” which is \$1,550 per student. The inflation enhancement would be \$200 in Calendar Year 2026 and \$300 in Calendar Year 2027. HB 1356 would also provide Local Effort Assistance to Charter Schools.

Currently, the State Property Tax, as well as local taxing districts have a growth limit of 101 percent (that is, the tax cannot grow more than one percent per year). HB 1356 would change the growth limit for local taxing districts from the current 101 percent to the lesser of 101 percent or 100 percent, plus inflation. The growth limit for the State Property Tax, however, would change from 101 percent to 100 percent, plus population change and inflation, not to exceed 103 percent.

For special education, the bill would eliminate the current 16.0 percent enrollment cap.

State funding for substitutes has not changed in over ten years, while the cost and need for substitutes continues to grow. HB 1356 would base substitute costs for classroom teachers on five funded substitute days per classroom teacher unit at a daily substitute rate of \$200 adjusted for inflation from the 2027–28 School Year. Substitute costs for classified staff would be based on two funded substitute days

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per classified staff unit at a daily substitute rate of \$150 adjusted for inflation from the 2027–28 school year.

Finally, the bill would require OSPI to convene a K–12 Funding Equity Work Group to analyze K–12 funding formulas and explore options for revisions to the funding formula that are responsive to student needs, including economic, demographic, and geographic differences in student and community populations. The Work Group’s required analysis is outlined in the bill. OSPI would be required to use the Work Group’s analysis to consider options for revising state and local funding formula. In November, 2025, and annually through 2027, OSPI must report on the Work Group’s progress and any proposed options. Interestingly, there is a limit to how much a new system could cost. The bill stipulates that the estimated cost of an option or group of options proposed by OSPI cannot exceed the estimated additional State Property Tax revenue (discussed above) when combined with the estimated additional state funding allocated in the bill.

## Big Three Update

In this first week of session, WASA and our Big Three Coalition partners jumped right into the pool, building on our momentum we gathered over the course of the last nine months. In addition to regular conversations, one of the key activities has been to work with legislators and staff on legislation to advance our issues. Legislation is on the table for all three of our priorities:

- **Special Education:** [SB 5263](#) and [SB 5307/HB 1310](#)
- **MSOC:** [SB 5192](#) and [HB 1338](#)
- **Pupil Transportation:** [SB 5187](#)

There are other bills that address these issues, and additional bills will likely be introduced; these are the key bills that we have been working on. Currently, there is not a Pupil Transportation bill in the House, although we expect one soon.

Next week in the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Committee, there will a “Big Three Day,” in which each of the Senate bills (SB 5263, SB 5307, SB 5192, SB 5187) will be heard. The hearing is scheduled Wednesday, January 22, at 1:30 p.m. There is also discussion of a similar “Big Three Day” in the House Appropriations Committee during the third week of session; however, that has not been confirmed.

So, let’s review what these bills do:

**Special Education.** [SB 5263](#) makes two key changes to special education funding: increasing the multipliers and reducing the safety net threshold. First, the bill would increase the multiplier for students ages three and four and those five year olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who are eligible for and receiving special education from the current 1.2 to 1.6381. Remember, all districts are funded for students with a base allocation (per full-time equivalent student), and special education students are funded with the same base allocation, multiplied by an excess cost factor (known as a “multiplier”). The bill would also increase the multiplier for K–12 special education students; however, the different multipliers to support inclusion of special education students in general education settings would be merged into one multiplier. Currently, the multiplier for special education students that spend more than 80 percent of the school day in a general education setting is set at 1.12 and 1.06 for special education students that spend less than 80 percent of the school day in a general education setting. The bill would merge those two sets of students and increase the new, single multiplier to 1.5289.

Second, SB 5263 would decrease the special education safety net threshold. To access the safety net, a school district’s expenditures for special education students must exceed an expenditure threshold, which is currently 2.3 times the

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statewide average per-pupil expenditure. SB 5263 would reduce the threshold to 1.5 times the average per-pupil expenditure.

An interesting note regarding SB 5263. The bill is prime sponsored by Senator Jamie Pedersen (Seattle), the Senate Majority Leader. His first co-sponsor is Senator John Braun (Centralia), the Senate Minority Leader. In the last few years, there have been intense disagreements over special education funding—often partisan spats. Special education is a major priority for both Senators Pedersen and Braun and the fact they were able to put partisanship aside to support a single vision advancing special education funding is extremely positive.

**SB 5307** (and its House companion, **HB 1310**) would increase the multiplier for students ages three and four and those five year olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten who are eligible for and receiving special education from the current 1.2 to 1.6381. For K–12 special education students, there would continue to be two tiers, but both would be increased. Currently, the multiplier for special education students that spend more than 80 percent of the school day in a general education setting is set at 1.12; the bill would increase this tier to 1.5289. For special education students that spend less than 80 of the school day in a general education setting the multiplier is set at 1.06; the bill would increase this tier to 1.447.

This bill would also address the special education enrollment cap and the special education safety net. SB 5307 would eliminate the current 16.0 percent cap and require OSPI to distribute safety net awards on a quarterly basis in certain circumstances. The safety net threshold would also be reduced from the current 2.3 times the statewide average per-pupil expenditure to 1.5 times the average per-pupil expenditure.

Additional special education bills are expected to be addressed this session, including **HB 1267**, which addresses the enrollment cap; **HB 1357**, which makes minor multiplier adjustments and provides funding for Inclusionary Practices pilots; and **SB 5253/HB 1257**, which responds to the court order in the *N.D. v. Reykdal* case. In essence, the state is required to provide special education services through the school year in which the student turns 22 years old (rather than 21). These and other bills will be a part of the conversation; however, we intend to spend our larger amount of time and energy on the multiplier issue, as addressed by SB 5263 and SB 5307/HB 1310.

**MSOC. SB 5192** increases per student allocations for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs. Rather than providing inflationary increases in each MSOC category, this bill provides an increase in total funding of approximately 12 percent, from the current \$1,533.02 per student to \$1,723.42 per student for K–12 and a grade 9–12 enhancement, from the current \$204.03 per student to \$229.37 per student; however, new language clarifies a school district’s full-time equivalent student enrollment is the average of the district’s prior three school years’ total annual average full-time equivalent enrollment.

As a technical issue, the bill strikes each individual funded category and removes language regarding the allocations being referenced in the budget. The minimum funding in the bill, however, is increased annually by inflation, defined as the Implicit Price Deflator (IPD) from the previous calendar year. (The listing of the individual categories is added to an accountability section, as described below.)

Additional language is added to statute that clarifies increased allocations provided “are intended to address growing material, supply, and operating costs and may not be expended for any other purpose.” Additionally, accountability language which previously has been embedded in the Operating Budget is inserted in statute via this bill. The new language requires each school district to annually report to OSPI all expenditures for materials, supplies, and operating costs, disaggregated by each of the categories previously outlined in the law, specifically: (i) Technology; (ii) Utilities and insurance; (iii) Curriculum and textbooks; (iv) Library materials; (v) Other supplies; (vi) Instructional professional development for certificated and

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classified staff; (vii) Facilities maintenance; and (viii) Security and central office administration.

SB 5192 is a positive step; however, it does not accomplish what school districts need. We will express support for the bill and specifically thank the sponsor for engaging in the conversation, but at the same time we will stress that the bill as written will not amply fund MSOC or provide sufficient support to eliminate the growing gap between our school districts' costs to run a district. We will work with the sponsor in an effort to adjust the bill—although HB 1338, below, would provide the needed support and aligns with our request. We fully support HB 1338, as written.

**HB 1338** is not a companion to the Senate Bill. While both bills would provide a significant increase in the per pupil allocation for MSOC, the House Bill is the preferred option—and the one that more closely aligns with our request. We had four specific requests and Representative Berg's bill addresses each one:

1. One-time “catch up.” This bill provides an increase in total funding of almost 23 percent from the current \$1,533.02 per student to \$1,879.76 per student for K–12 and a grade 9–12 enhancement, from the current \$204.03 per student to \$250.72 per student. Each individual enumerated category is also increased by almost 23 percent.
2. Annual inflationary increases. Each of the provided increases above are adjusted annually by inflation, defined as the Implicit Price Deflator (IPD) from the previous calendar year.
3. Enhanced Small School Factor. In addition to the increased underlying allocations, new language stipulates a minimum allocation per certificated staff unit provided above the school prototypes for small schools of \$16,870.44 for materials, supplies, and operating costs. This funding will also be adjusted annually for inflation (IPD).
4. Regular rebase. New language requires the Legislature, beginning in the 2029–30 School Year and every four years thereafter, to review and rebase materials, supplies, and operating costs compared to school districts' actual operations costs and revise minimum allocations, as necessary.

Although HB 1338 meets all of our requests, the bill goes farther. The bill also funds lower average class sizes in Skills Center programs, from the current 19.00 students per teacher to 16.67 students per teacher.

Finally, current law requires the Operating Budget to provide funding to specific CTE programs, based on full-time equivalent student enrollment. This bill provides specific funding amounts per annual average full-time equivalent student enrollment (adjusted annually by inflation) in the following programs:

- \$1,799.57—Exploratory Career and Technical Education courses for students in grades seven through 12;
- \$1,799.57—Preparatory Career and Technical Education courses for students in grades nine through 12 offered in a high school; and
- \$2,159.48—Preparatory Career and Technical Education courses for students in grades 11 and 12 offered through a Skills Center

**Pupil Transportation.** Similar to legislation introduced in previous sessions, **SB 5187** would require OSPI to perform an analysis of school district transportation costs and allocations following the 2026–27 School Year. The analysis, due to the Legislature by June 1, 2028, would be required to address the mileage, ridership, and costs for each district, disaggregated by the following student categories:

- Students who require special transportation services to access special education services documented in an approved Individualized Education Program;

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- Students who meet the definition of homeless where transportation is required by the McKinney-Vento Act or other federal requirements;
- Students who are in foster care where transportation is required outside of the normal school district boundary; and
- Students attending a Skills Center

Using this analysis, OSPI would be required to develop a transparent, predictable, and comprehensive student transportation funding model that addresses the diverse needs of students and the unique characteristics of school districts. Specifically, the new funding model must be inclusive of student transportation services for the disaggregated student categories addressed in the analysis; and the new funding model must include mechanisms to address the unique transportation challenges faced by high population density urban school districts and rural, geographically large districts that have a relatively low number of schools in proportion to the geographic size of the school district.

While previous bills have focused on “special passengers”—special education students, homeless students, and foster care students, as addressed in the required analysis—SB 5187 specifically addresses homeless students. In addition to funding provided under the pupil transportation funding model, OSPI would be required to provide additional funds to school districts in the amount of \$400 per student for homeless students that require special transportation due to the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act. These additional funds would be restricted and only allowed to be used to address transportation costs associated with these students. Additionally, current required reporting would be expanded to require school districts to report the number of students requiring special transportation due to requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.

As noted above, we do not have a Pupil Transportation bill in the House, yet; however, we are working with members and staff and anticipate a bill will be introduced in the coming days. It will likely be an identical companion to the Senate bill, SB 5187.

## **Engaging in the Process**

In Monday’s “[Opening Day Special Edition](#)” of *TWIO*, we reviewed how to participate in the Committee process—providing testimony (in-person or remotely), submitting written comments, or simply noting your support or opposition of a bill. If you are looking for your opportunity to engage, Week Two provides your chance to jump in. **The four Big Three bills ([SB 5263](#), [SB 5307](#), [SB 5192](#), [SB 5187](#)) will be heard on Wednesday, January 22, at 1:30 p.m. in the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee—and we need your support.** There are already several educators signed up to testify on each bill, but **we encourage you to at least take a few minutes to sign in to support these bills.** This could turn into a numbers game, as we anticipate there will be opposition to some or all of the bills. The Conservative Ladies of Washington are active again and they are flooding Committees with sign-ins—we do not know if they will engage on these issues, but whether they show or not, we need numbers to show legislators how important these issues are to you.

- Follow this link to join in: [Senate Committee Sign In](#)
- Click on the bill you want to act on (Note: if you want to act on more than one bill, you have to do one at a time)
- Click on the type of testimony: testify in-person or remotely; note your position; or submit written comments
- On the next page, note your Support, then complete the registration form and submit



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## **AEA**

By Mitch Denning

The 69th Legislature began on Monday, and here's a quick update on AEA's activities this week.

On Monday, we submitted written testimony to the House Appropriations Committee on [HB 1198](#), the Governor's 2025–27 operating budget. AEA is opposed to this budget, as the K–12 policy provisions are reduced by \$200 Million. Notwithstanding an increase of \$184 Million for districts qualifying for the federal program Community Eligibility Provision, the remainder of the K–12 portion, 41.9 percent of the overall operating budget, does not fund MSOC, special education, pupil transportation and universal free school meals.

Also, on Monday, we testified PRO in Senate Ways & Means on [SB 5195](#), the Governor's 2025–27 capital budget. This budget is one of the largest K–12 capital budgets in recent years. We shared with the committee our support for School Health and Safety (\$31 Million), including \$13 Million for the Urgent School Repair Program, \$15 Million for the Healthy Kids/Healthy Schools grant program, and \$78 Million for the School Seismic Safety Retrofit Program.

On Tuesday, AEA testified CON on [SB 5167](#), the companion bill to [HB 1198](#) in Senate Ways and Means, and on Thursday, we testified PRO on [HB 1216](#), the companion bill to [SB 5195](#) in House Capital Budget.

Also on Thursday, WAMOA testified PRO in Senate Early Learning/K–12 on [SB 5190](#), which would extend the deadline for school districts who have buildings that need to be updated to comply with the provisions of the Clean Buildings Act of 2019. WAMOA board member, Michael Knaack, sustainability manager, Tacoma PS, and WAMOA president Devlin Piplic, construction manager, Northshore SD, shared that a number of their buildings would have to be updated, but State funding would be necessary to comply with the Clean Energy Performance Standards per the 2019 law. We also shared that AEA doesn't support unfunded mandates.

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## **Pensions/Health Benefits**

By Fred Yancey—The Nexus Group

### **Health, Pension, and Other Benefit Issues**

*“Waste neither time nor money but make the best use of both.”*

— Ben Franklin

The Legislative Session has begun, and hearings are being held on numerous bills. The main task of the legislature is to pass a new biennial budget and an updated supplemental budget. And the press and caucus attention has been focused on the issue of dollars and cents given a projected deficit of \$6-\$12-billion-dollar deficit (depending on which party is talking.) As Jackie Mason says, “I have enough money to last me the rest of my life (biennium) unless I buy something.”

Meanwhile, a brief summary of some selected bills and/or issues is below:

1. The Select Committee on Pension Policy has unanimously approved agency request legislation to restore the permanent COLA for TRS/PRS Plans 1 members. Given the fiscal projected state deficit, it will be an uphill struggle for passage. Costs to employers/employees will be spread over 15 years. ([SB 5113](#)) A hearing before the Senate Ways & Means Committee will be held Thursday, January 23.
2. [SB 5085](#) has been introduced to establish a Legacy Retirement System, merging PERS/TRS Plans 1 and LEOFF Plan 1 into a single system. This would also establish and fund a permanent COLA for PERS/TRS Plans 1 members. A hearing before the Senate Ways & Means Committee will be held Thursday, January 23.

**Some background:** [SB 5085](#) would provide short and long-term relief to state and local government budgets by getting them out from under their ongoing obligations to TRS & PERS 1: the UAAL and the ad hoc COLA costs.

#### **Advantages of such a plan:**

Permanently solves the TRS 1/PERS 1 COLA issue.

All TRS 1/PERS 1 retirees receive the ongoing COLA that other plans offer. No more ad-hoc COLAs will be needed. The state and local governments will save hundreds of millions of dollars. Existing employer obligations to TRS 1/PERS 1 will be erased. Money will be saved in both the short and long term. This is one of the only legal ways to utilize the LEOFF 1 surplus to address the current budget shortfall. No members will lose benefits. LEOFF 1 members will continue to have the most generous pension plan offered by the state.

3. [SB 5114](#) has been introduced concerning covering the premium costs of insurance during the month of one’s death. This is a continued carry-over of an issue from last session. Senate Ways & Means Committee will hold a hearing on the bill Thursday, January 23.
4. All PEBB Medicare plans offered now include Part D (prescription drug coverage) although different reimbursements depend upon the plan chosen. Also, there is now a \$2,000 maximum out of pocket cost.
5. WSSRA, WSSDA, WASA, and AESD are working to see if a sunset provision in [HB 1699](#) which currently allows retired administrators

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to work in smaller districts for 1040 hours. This opportunity will end July 1, 2025, if not changed. Once removed, there are no provisions for retired administrators to return to work at all, even under reduced hours. However, there is little data supplied from the field that shows a need, even though a request has been made to furnish any such data.

6. **SB 5086** has been introduced. This bill seeks to consolidate PEBB and SEBB. The Health Care Authority has recently submitted a report looking toward consolidation. More information is needed in order to assess this bill.
7. Key Facts About Legislative Bills:
  - **No Limits:** Legislators can introduce an unlimited number of bills, even as late as the last day of the session.
  - **Two-Year Lifespan:** Bills introduced in odd-numbered years remain active for the two-year legislative biennium. Bills from the 2024 session have expired and must be reintroduced with new numbers if desired.
  - **Consideration is Not Guaranteed:** There is no obligation for an introduced bill to be heard, although some states mandate hearings for all submitted bills.
8. What to Expect in 2025:
  - **Bill Volume:** 2,000 to 3,000 bills are expected to be introduced. However, few will be given a hearing, and only about 10 percent of these will become law.
  - **Budget Priority:** Legislature's only mandated task is to pass a biennial operating budget. Failure to do so by June 30 would disrupt state operations starting July.

# Legislative Resources

## Committee Meeting Schedule

Legislative Committees Meetings are scheduled to be held at the following times but are subject to change.

Up-to-date meeting schedules and agendas are available on the [State Legislature website](#).

### Mondays

1:30–3:30 p.m.  
House Education  
HHRA & Virtual

4–6 p.m.  
House Appropriations  
HHRA & Virtual

Senate Ways & Means  
SHR4 & Virtual

### Tuesdays

8–10 a.m.  
Senate Early Learning & K–12  
SHR1 & Virtual

4–6 p.m.  
House Education  
HHRA & Virtual

Senate Ways & Means  
SHR4 & Virtual

### Wednesdays

1:30–3:30 p.m.  
Senate Early Learning & K–12  
SHR1 & Virtual

4–6 p.m.  
House Appropriations  
HHRA & Virtual

### Thursdays

8–10 a.m.  
House Education  
HHRA & Virtual

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.  
Senate Early Learning & K–12  
SHR1 & Virtual

4–6 p.m.  
House Appropriations  
HHRA & Virtual

Senate Ways & Means  
SHR4 & Virtual

### Useful Links

#### Washington State Government

<http://www.access.wa.gov>

#### State Legislature

<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

#### Senate

<https://www.leg.wa.gov/about-the-legislature/senate/>

#### House of Representatives

<https://www.leg.wa.gov/about-the-legislature/house-of-representatives/>

#### Legislative Committees

<https://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/CommitteeListing.aspx>

#### Legislative Schedules

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/pages/calendar.aspx>

#### Office of the Governor

<http://www.governor.wa.gov>

#### OSPI

<http://www.k12.wa.us>

#### TVW

<http://www.tvw.org>

## Session Cut-off Calendar

### January 13, 2025

First Day of Session.

### February 21, 2025

Last day to read in committee reports in house of origin, except House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation Committees.

### February 28, 2025

Last day to read in committee reports from House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation Committees in house of origin.

### March 12, 2025

Last day to consider bills in house of origin (5 p.m.).

### April 2, 2025

Last day to read in committee reports from opposite house, except House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation Committees.

### April 8, 2025

Last day to read in opposite house committee reports from House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation Committees.

### April 16, 2025\*

Last day to consider opposite house bills (5 p.m.) (except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session).

### April 27, 2025

Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution.

\* After 5:00 p.m. on the 54th day, only initiatives, alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, matters that affect state revenue, messages pertaining to amendments, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session may be considered.

## Bill Watch

TWIO tracks critical education bills each week as they are introduced. Detailed bill information can be accessed by clicking on the bill number. The following is a list of the bills of highest interest to school administrators. A more comprehensive bill watch list is located on the [WASA website](#).

Bill #	Title	Status	Sponsor
<a href="#">HB 1011</a>	School safety capital grants	H Cap Budget	Jacobsen
<a href="#">HB 1020</a>	Academic reengagement	H Education	Shavers
<a href="#">HB 1021</a>	Military families/education	H Education	Shavers
<a href="#">HB 1028</a>	Child exposure to violence	H EL & Human Svc	Goodman
<a href="#">HB 1031</a>	School facility temperatures	H Education	Reeves
<a href="#">HB 1032</a>	School district elections	H Education	Stonier
<a href="#">HB 1042</a>	County treasurer costs	H Finance	Wylie
<a href="#">HB 1051</a>	IEP team meetings/recording	H Education	Walsh
<a href="#">HB 1055</a>	Transparency ombuds study	H State Govt & T	Abbarno
<a href="#">HB 1079</a> (SB 5193)	Remote testing	H Education	Ortiz-Self
<a href="#">HB 1085</a> (SB 5272)	School safety/penalties	H Community Safe	Schmidt
<a href="#">HB 1116</a>	Election day	H Exec Action	Mena
<a href="#">HB 1120</a>	School staff salary alloc.	H Approps	Shavers
<a href="#">HB 1121</a>	Work restrictions/age 16, 17	H Labor & Workpl	McClintock
<a href="#">HB 1122</a> (SB 5346)	Student mobile device use	H Education	McClintock
<a href="#">HB 1134</a>	Schools/resource conserv.	H Education	Bergquist
<a href="#">HB 1136</a>	Student navigational support	H Postsec Ed & W	Leavitt
<a href="#">HB 1140</a>	K-12 scholarship program	H Education	Couture
<a href="#">HB 1151</a> (SB 5210)	Ninth grade success grants	H Approps	Steele
<a href="#">HB 1167</a>	Maritime careers task force	H Education	Shavers
<a href="#">HB 1189</a>	School volunteers/conviction	H Education	Simmons
<a href="#">HB 1197</a> (SB 5166)	Operating budget, supp.	H Approps	Ormsby
<a href="#">HB 1198</a> (SB 5167)	Operating budget	H Approps	Ormsby
<a href="#">HB 1202</a> (SB 5194)	State gen. obligation bonds	H Cap Budget	Tharinger
<a href="#">HB 1203</a> (SB 5183)	Tobacco & nicotine products	H ConsPro&Bus	Reeves
<a href="#">HB 1213</a>	Paid family & medical leave	H Labor & Workpl	Berry
<a href="#">HB 1216</a> (SB 5195)	Capital budget	H Cap Budget	Tharinger
<a href="#">HB 1225</a>	Budgeting process	H Approps	Couture
<a href="#">HB 1226</a> (SB 5160)	Transportation budget, supp.	H Transportation	Fey
<a href="#">HB 1227</a> (SB 5161)	Transportation budget	H Transportation	Fey
<a href="#">HB 1231</a>	Public school starting times	H Education	McEntire
<a href="#">HB 1241</a>	Students with disabilities	H Education	Pollet
<a href="#">HB 1246</a>	Juvenile justice	H EL & Human Svc	Couture
<a href="#">HB 1257</a> (SB 5253)	Special education services	H Education	Pollet
<a href="#">HB 1259</a>	Behavioral health/schools	H Postsec Ed & W	Shavers

<a href="#">HB 1266</a>	Commission on boys and men	H State Govt & T	Dye
<a href="#">HB 1267</a>	Special education funding	H Approps	Couture
<a href="#">HB 1273</a>	Dual credit program access	H Education	Paul
<a href="#">HB 1280</a>	Career & tech. ed./6th grade	H Approps	Shavers
<a href="#">HB 1285</a>	Financial education	H Education	Rude
<a href="#">HB 1289</a>	Public school survey info.	H Education	McClintock
<a href="#">HB 1292</a> (SB 5113)	Plan 1 retiree COLAs	H Approps	Leavitt
<a href="#">HB 1295</a>	Reading and writing literacy	H Education	Pollet
<a href="#">HB 1296</a>	Public education system	H Education	Stonier
<a href="#">HB 1298</a> (SB 5158)	Student athlete insurance	H Postsec Ed & W	Berg
<a href="#">HB 1303</a>	Environmental justice	H Env & Energy	Mena
<a href="#">HB 1308</a> (SB 5345)	Access to personnel records	H Labor & Workpl	Reed
<a href="#">HB 1310</a> (SB 5307)	Special education funding	H Approps	Pollet
<a href="#">HB 1312</a> (SB 5114)	Retirement benefits/death	H Approps	Fitzgibbon
<a href="#">HB 1314</a> (SB 5297)	Early learning facilities	H Cap Budget	Callan
<a href="#">HB 1330</a> (SB 5086)	PEBB & SEBB consolidation	H Approps	Lekanoff
<a href="#">HB 1334</a>	Property tax revenue growth	H Finance	Pollet
<a href="#">HB 1338</a>	School operating costs	H Approps	Berg
<a href="#">HB 1339</a>	Even-numbered year elections	H State Govt & T	Gregerson
<a href="#">HB 1352</a> (SB 5270)	Educator support/nurses	H Education	Bernbaum
<a href="#">HB 1356</a>	K-12 funding	H Approps	Bergquist
<a href="#">HB 1357</a>	Special education funding	H Approps	Stonier
<a href="#">HJR 4201</a>	School district bonds	H Education	Stonier
<a href="#">SB 5003</a>	School security grants	S EL/K-12	Torres
<a href="#">SB 5004</a>	School emergency response	S EL/K-12	Torres
<a href="#">SB 5007</a>	Chronically absent students	S EL/K-12	Braun
<a href="#">SB 5008</a>	Public school tools	S EL/K-12	Braun
<a href="#">SB 5009</a>	Student transp. allocation	S EL/K-12	Braun
<a href="#">SB 5012</a>	Interscholastic athletics	S EL/K-12	Fortunato
<a href="#">SB 5025</a>	Educational interpreters	S EL/K-12	Lovick
<a href="#">SB 5026</a>	Motor vehicle sales tax	S Ways & Means	King
<a href="#">SB 5030</a>	Vital records access	S EL/K-12	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5035</a>	Voter education	S State Gov/Trib	Chapman
<a href="#">SB 5041</a>	Unemp ins/strikes & lockouts	S Labor & Comm	Riccelli
<a href="#">SB 5046</a>	Kimchi day	S State Gov/Trib	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5073</a>	Motor vehicles sales tax use	S Ways & Means	Fortunato
<a href="#">SB 5080</a>	Financial education	S EL/K-12	Valdez
<a href="#">SB 5085</a>	Closed retirement plans	S Ways & Means	Robinson
<a href="#">SB 5086</a> (HB 1330)	PEBB & SEBB consolidation	S Ways & Means	Robinson

<a href="#">SB 5095</a>	School construction debt	S EL/K-12	Dhingra
<a href="#">SB 5097</a>	Girls' athletic activities	S EL/K-12	Warnick
<a href="#">SB 5102</a>	Public risk pool records	S State Gov/Trib	Hasegawa
<a href="#">SB 5106</a>	Eid al-Fitr & Eid al-Adha	S State Gov/Trib	Trudeau
<a href="#">SB 5113</a> (HB 1292)	Plan 1 retiree COLAs	S Ways & Means	Boehnke
<a href="#">SB 5114</a> (HB 1312)	Retirement benefits/death	S Ways & Means	Boehnke
<a href="#">SB 5120</a>	Learning assistance program	S EL/K-12	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5123</a>	Discrimination in schools	S EL/K-12	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5126</a>	Student mental health net.	S EL/K-12	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5134</a>	Chinese Americans/schools	S EL/K-12	McCune
<a href="#">SB 5135</a>	Curriculum establishment	S EL/K-12	McCune
<a href="#">SB 5136</a>	Student given names	S EL/K-12	McCune
<a href="#">SB 5137</a>	Sex ed./parent approval	S EL/K-12	McCune
<a href="#">SB 5142</a>	Eminent domain purchase back	S Law & Justice	Hasegawa
<a href="#">SB 5150</a>	Juvenile access to attorney	S Human Services	Gildon
<a href="#">SB 5151</a>	Annual state spending growth	S Ways & Means	Gildon
<a href="#">SB 5158</a> (HB 1298)	Student athlete insurance	S Higher Ed & Wo	Valdez
<a href="#">SB 5159</a>	Trick-or-treat day	S State Gov/Trib	Shewmake
<a href="#">SB 5160</a> (HB 1226)	Transportation budget, supp.	S Transportation	Liias
<a href="#">SB 5161</a> (HB 1227)	Transportation budget	S Transportation	Liias
<a href="#">SB 5164</a>	Student navigational support	S Higher Ed & Wo	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5166</a> (HB 1197)	Operating budget, supp.	S Ways & Means	Robinson
<a href="#">SB 5167</a> (HB 1198)	Operating budget	S Ways & Means	Robinson
<a href="#">SB 5177</a>	Professional dev. resources	S EL/K-12	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5179</a>	Education complaint process	S EL/K-12	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5180</a>	Schools/gender inclusive	S EL/K-12	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5181</a>	Parents rights in education	S EL/K-12	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5183</a> (HB 1203)	Tobacco & nicotine products	S Health & Long-	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5186</a>	School district elections	S EL/K-12	Krishnadasan
<a href="#">SB 5187</a>	Student transportation	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5189</a>	Competency-based education	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5190</a>	School building energy perf.	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5192</a>	School district materials	S EL/K-12	Nobles
<a href="#">SB 5193</a> (HB 1079)	Remote testing	S EL/K-12	Cortes
<a href="#">SB 5194</a> (HB 1202)	State gen. obligation bonds	S Ways & Means	Trudeau
<a href="#">SB 5195</a> (HB 1216)	Capital budget	S Ways & Means	Trudeau
<a href="#">SB 5210</a> (HB 1151)	Ninth grade success grants	S EL/K-12	Liias
<a href="#">SB 5216</a>	Green energy/community	S Environment, E	Shewmake
<a href="#">SB 5230</a>	Juvenile attorney exceptions	S Human Services	Wagoner

<a href="#">SB 5235</a>	Public school statutes	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5240</a>	Anaphylaxis med. in schools	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5247</a>	Naselle Youth Camp property	S State Gov/Trib	Wilson
<a href="#">SB 5253</a> (HB 1257)	Special education services	S EL/K-12	Cortes
<a href="#">SB 5263</a>	Special education funding	S EL/K-12	Pedersen
<a href="#">SB 5270</a> (HB 1352)	Educator support/nurses	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5271</a>	School nurse requirement	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5272</a> (HB 1085)	School safety/penalties	S EL/K-12	Lovick
<a href="#">SB 5292</a>	Family & medical leave rates	S Labor & Comm	Conway
<a href="#">SB 5293</a>	Prevailing wage/public works	S Labor & Comm	King
<a href="#">SB 5307</a> (HB 1310)	Special education funding	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5327</a>	Learning standards	S EL/K-12	Wellman
<a href="#">SB 5345</a> (HB 1308)	Access to personnel records	S Labor & Comm	Saldana
<a href="#">SB 5346</a> (HB 1122)	Student mobile device use	S EL/K-12	Liias
<a href="#">SB 5352</a>	Free school meals	S EL/K-12	Riccelli
<a href="#">SJR 8200</a>	School district bond voting	S EL/K-12	Cortes