



# Senator **CURTIS KING**

*Serving Washington's 14th Legislative District*

## 2023 Session Review

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This year's 105-day regular legislative session ended on April 23. Legislators also returned to Olympia on May 16 for a one-day special session to pass a law to fix our state's flawed drug-possession legislation.

The Legislature worked to address many serious statewide public-safety issues this past session. We passed SB 5352 to restore some police pursuits, but I'm concerned it does not do enough to address our current crime and safety crisis. Multiple anti-firearm bills were passed that restrict access to guns, while SB 5599 was passed to restrict parents' access to their children who are seeking certain types of health care. I did not support these bills; the anti-gun bills erode our constitutional right to protection, while the other drives an unnecessary and harmful government wedge between a child and their parents. I believe there are other, better solutions to these problems and societal needs.

It continues to be a great honor and privilege to serve as your 14th Legislative District State Senator. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out. You can contact my office by phone, email or postal mail.



Senator Curtis King  
14th Legislative District

### ▶ **OLYMPIA OFFICE**

414 Legislative Building  
PO Box 40414  
Olympia, WA 98504-0414

### ▶ **EMAIL**

Curtis.King@leg.wa.gov

### ▶ **PHONE:**

360-786-7626

### ▶ **LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE**

1-800-562-6000

### ▶ **WEBSITE**

SenatorCurtisKing.org

### ▶ **SENATE COMMITTEES:**

- Labor and Commerce  
(ranking Republican)
- Transportation  
(ranking Republican)
- Rules

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Selah • Toppenish • Trout Lake • Wapato • White Salmon • White Swan • Yakima

### New two-year capital budget funds projects in 14<sup>th</sup> District

The Legislature unanimously approved a \$9 million, two-year state capital budget, which provides money for the construction and maintenance of state buildings, public schools, higher-education facilities, public lands, parks and other assets throughout Washington.

Working with my 14th District seatmates, Rep. Chris Corry and Rep. Gina Mosbrucker, we were able to secure capital-budget funding for many local projects, including:

- Triumph Treatment Center, Substance Use Disorder & Mental Health Inpatient Treatment (Yakima) - \$11,750,000
- Pacific Northwest University Dental School (Yakima) - \$5,000,000
- SHC Medical Center Behavioral Health – Astria/Toppenish Hospital (Toppenish) – \$2,500,000
- City of Selah Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements (Selah) - \$1,442,000
- MLK Jr. Park & Swimming Pool (Yakima) - \$1,160,000
- OIC Excel Youth Center (Yakima) - \$1,054,000
- Yakima County Meals on Wheels (Union Gap) – \$1,000,000
- Goldendale Municipal Airport - Land Acquisition (Goldendale) – \$361,000
- High Prairie Fire District 14 Emergency Preparedness (Lyle) – \$248,000



Sen. King discusses legislation with Sen. Karen Keiser during Senate floor debate.



### New state transportation budget funds 14th District projects

As ranking Republican on the Senate Transportation Committee, I helped create the new two-year state transportation budget. This spending plan includes funding for several projects found in the 14th District. The most significant is the Columbia River bridge replacement between White Salmon and Hood River. Other projects include a new underpass for State Route 14 in Bingen, and multiple new pedestrian and bike paths throughout the district.

### WA Cares payroll tax starting July 1

REMINDER: The new Washington state payroll tax **WA Cares** for long-term care starts July 1, 2023, which will take .58% out of workers' paychecks; as an example, \$24.17 a month for a worker making \$50,000 annually. Exemptions are available for out-of-state residents, temporary visa holders, military spouses and some disabled veterans.

Visit [wacaresfund.wa.gov](https://wacaresfund.wa.gov) for more information.





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## Legislature partially restores officers' ability to conduct vehicle pursuits

The Legislature this year passed Senate Bill 5352, which allows for more vehicle pursuits of criminal suspects by law enforcement officers.

SB 5352's intention is to help fix our state's bad pursuit law, passed by the Democratic majorities in 2021. Before that law went into effect, officers only needed "reasonable suspicion" to initiate a vehicle pursuit. The 2021 law only allows such vehicle pursuits based on "probable cause." As a result, officers have been forced to watch criminals drive away instead of being apprehended.

Under the compromise bill passed by the Legislature this year, a vehicle pursuit can occur if there is reasonable suspicion in several instances, including violent offenses, sex offenses, vehicular assault offenses, assault in the first-to-fourth degree involving domestic violence, an escape, or a driving-under-the-influence offense. I was in support of the proposed floor amendments to allow pursuit of vehicle theft and reckless driving, but unfortunately those specific inclusions were voted down by the majority party.

According to a Washington State Patrol report, an average of 1,200 suspects per year fled from police between 2014 and 2020. In 2022, after the pursuit standard was changed to probable cause, 3,100 suspects fled — an increase of more than 150%.



## Legislature passes drug-possession law during special session

After failing to pass a new drug-possession law during the regular session, the Legislature used a one-day special session on May 16 to pass a compromise bill (Senate Bill 5536). Both the Senate and House had strong majorities voting for it. I voted "yes." The governor signed it the same day.



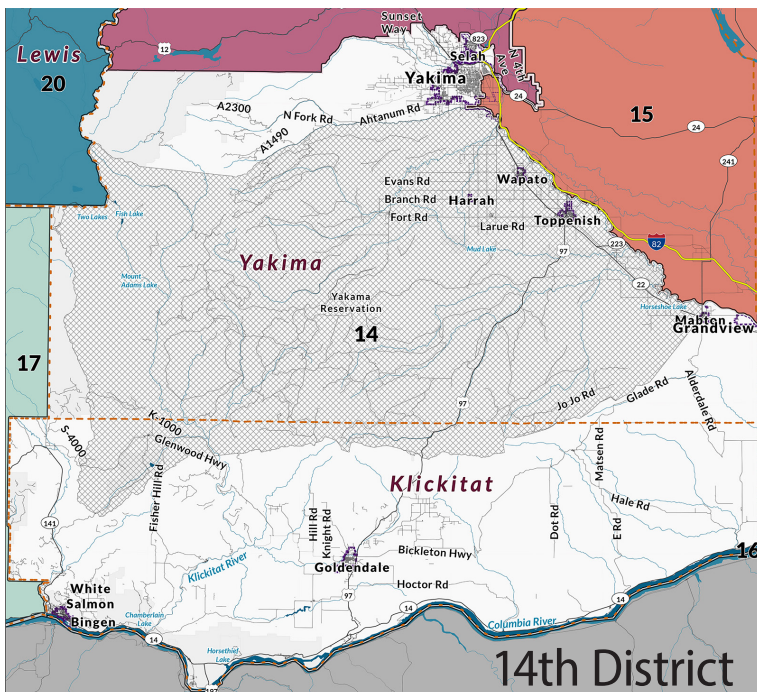
While this new law isn't perfect, it is a step in the right direction and fixes some of the problems in the 2021 drug-possession law that was set to expire on July 1 this year. The new law will provide opportunities to those who seek treatment for drug addiction and hold accountable drug offenders who refuse treatment. If a new law had not been enacted by July 1, there would have been no statewide criminal penalties for possession of illegal hard drugs like fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine. Many cities indicated they would have passed their own laws or ordinances on illegal-drug possession.

## Governor signs anti-firearm bills

Despite strong opposition from gun supporters throughout Washington, Governor Inslee recently signed three anti-firearm bills that were passed by the Democrat-led Legislature this year:

- House Bill 1240 bans the sale of more than 60 semi-automatic firearms in Washington.
- House Bill 1143 prohibits someone from buying a firearm from a dealer unless the buyer has passed a background check and has completed a firearm-safety program.
- Senate Bill 5078 basically seeks to hold manufacturers, dealers and others responsible for how firearms are used.

I voted against all three measures because they infringe on people's Second Amendment rights.



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Senator  
**CURTIS KING**

*14th Legislative District*

PO Box 40414

Olympia, WA 98504-0414

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## 2023 Session Review



### Governor signs Sen. King's bill helping rural hospital in Toppenish

The future of the hospital that serves Toppenish and much of the lower Yakima Valley is more secure thanks to a bipartisan bill that I primed-sponsored this year. This measure has been signed by Governor Inslee.

Senate Bill 5532 will provide enhanced payments to low-volume, small rural hospitals like Astria Toppenish. Under the bill, the hospital will receive increased Medicaid payments: 120% for inpatient and 200% for outpatient services.

Thanks to these increases, Astria Toppenish Hospital will be on solid financial ground instead of being at risk of closing. This hospital is extremely important to the lower Yakima Valley, our Hispanic community and the Yakama Tribe. The bill received unanimous approval through every step in the House and Senate.