2nd DISTRICT STATE LEGISLATORS

Andrew Barkis • Matt Marshall • 2026 Legislative Report

Representative
Andrew Barkis

Website: RepresentativeAndrewBarkis.com

Email: Andrew.Barkis@leg.wa.gov

Olympia office:
427A Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Toll Free: (800) 562-6000
Direct Line: (360) 786-7824

Committees:
- Transportation (Ranking)
- Housing

Representative
Matt Marshall

Website: RepresentativeMattMarshall.com

Email: Matt.Marshall@leg.wa.gov

Olympia office:
406 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Toll Free: (800) 562-6000
Direct Line: (360) 786-7912

Committees:
- Health Care & Wellness (Assistant Ranking)
- Appropriations
- Education

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Over the past two years, majority Democrats have made Washington less affordable and life harder for residents in every corner of the state.

Under one-party rule, families are paying more for gas, groceries, housing, child care, and nearly everything else. Small businesses are also under strain.

Instead of addressing affordability concerns, Democrats chose a familiar playbook: more taxes, more spending, and more government.

That is what defined this biennium.

Democrats passed a record $12.5 billion in tax increases last year and came back this year to pass a new state income tax. They pushed state spending above $80 billion, drained reserves, and left Washington in one of the weakest financial positions in the country.

While Republicans do not control any part of the agenda in Olympia, that doesn't mean we're mere bystanders. We have fought relentlessly to expose bad policy, force accountability, protect taxpayers, and secure the district priorities that still can be won from the minority. That has meant pressing for stronger transportation policy, more housing supply, better stewardship of taxpayer dollars, safer communities, and a state government that does the basics well.

Despite some of the big losses this biennium, there were real wins for the 2nd District, especially in transportation and capital projects that will improve mobility, infrastructure, and local facilities. But there is so much more to do.

This mailer lays out the fights that mattered, the results we delivered, and the direction we believe our state needs to head if we're going to solve the growing list of challenges we face.

It is an honor to serve you. Please reach out to us or our offices anytime.

Sincerely,

Rep. Andrew Barkis

Rep. Matt Marshall

TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:
1-800-562-6000

TTY (HEARING-IMPAIRED HOTLINE):
1-800-833-6388

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AS FAMILIES NEED RELIEF, DEMOCRATS RAISE TAXES

The clearest failure of the last two years was the majority's refusal to take Washington's affordability crisis seriously.

Washington is one of the most expensive places in America to build a life. Our state ranks fifth for overall cost of living, while families are paying more for nearly every basic necessity. Gas prices are about 30% above the national average. Grocery costs rank sixth highest in the country, as does the cost of raising a child. Housing is just as punishing, with the median price of a new home nearing $650,000. At that price point, 76% of Washington households (2.5 million) are unable to afford a new home.

Families needed relief this biennium. Instead, Democrats made things worse.

In 2025, they passed a record $12.5 billion in tax increases. Then this year, they came back and passed a new state income tax that has since been signed into law by Gov. Bob Ferguson.

House Republicans fought that bill for more than 24 consecutive hours on the House floor, setting a modern legislative record. We offered amendment after amendment to protect working families, retirees, veterans, small businesses, and taxpayers. We proposed requiring voter approval, lowering the rate from 9.9% to 1%, protecting small-business income, exempting military and retirement income, reducing the state sales tax, and preventing the tax from ever expanding downward.

Every one of those amendments was rejected. When the bill passed, Democrats hugged each other on the House floor. Raising taxes should be a last resort, sober act of government, not something to celebrate.

That reaction said a great deal about where their priorities are. The same pattern of higher taxes, more spending, and weaker reserves is putting the future of our state at risk. Washington needs the opposite approach before it is too late: lower costs, stronger budgeting, and a government that finally learns to live within its means.

OPERATING BUDGET

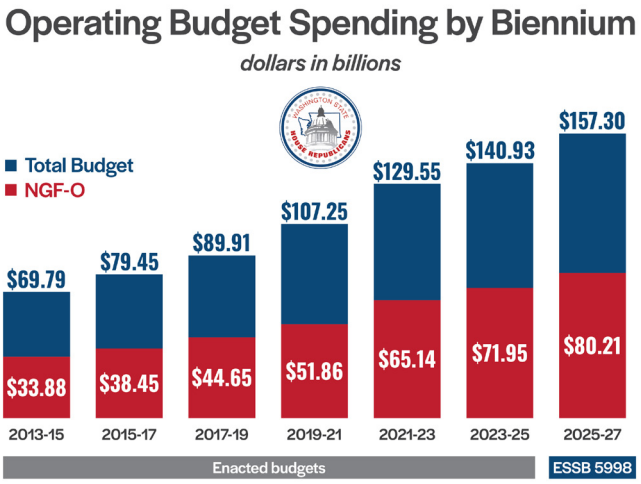
The operating budget makes one thing clear: Democrats are in full control, and Washington is paying the price.

House Republicans are shut out of the final budget-writing process, which means millions of Washingtonians are excluded while the state's biggest spending decisions are made behind closed doors. With full control for years now, Democratic budget writers have turned a budget surplus into a deficit, passed record tax increases and increased spending to grow the size of government.

The latest operating budget increases spending by another $2.3 billion and spends $4.9 billion more than the state is expected to collect in the 2025-27 biennium. It also assumes another $2.7 billion in tax increases over the four-year outlook, including money from the new state income tax before it is even scheduled to take effect.

That is not responsible budgeting. It is the same failed pattern all over again.

Washington now ranks dead last in the nation in total reserves and does not even have enough on hand to keep government running for a full month. The rainy day fund is also in weak shape, with less than two weeks of reserves set aside. Most states have far more.



The operating budget has grown from $33.9 billion in 2013-15 to $80.2 billion in 2025-27, but results across the state remain poor. When spending more than doubles over roughly a decade and taxpayers are still getting higher taxes, weak reserves, and disappointing outcomes, the problem is not a lack of revenue.

Washington families deserve better than closed-door budgeting, endless tax demands, and a government that keeps growing while results fall short.

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TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

The state's transportation budget should start with the basics: maintaining the roads and bridges people use every day, preserving critical infrastructure, and keeping promised projects moving.

The 2025-27 transportation budget and this year's supplemental update largely follow that approach. Together, they total about $16.7 billion and include an additional $340 million for maintenance and preservation heading into the upcoming construction season.

For the 2nd District, that means real progress on projects people rely on every day. That includes continued work on Yelm Loop Phase 2 on SR 510, new roundabouts on SR 507, the Orting Pedestrian Bridge, Bethel School District sidewalk projects, Roy sidewalk and crossing improvements, response work tied to the SR 165 Fairfax Bridge closure, major corridor improvements near Interstate 5 and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and regional transit investments.

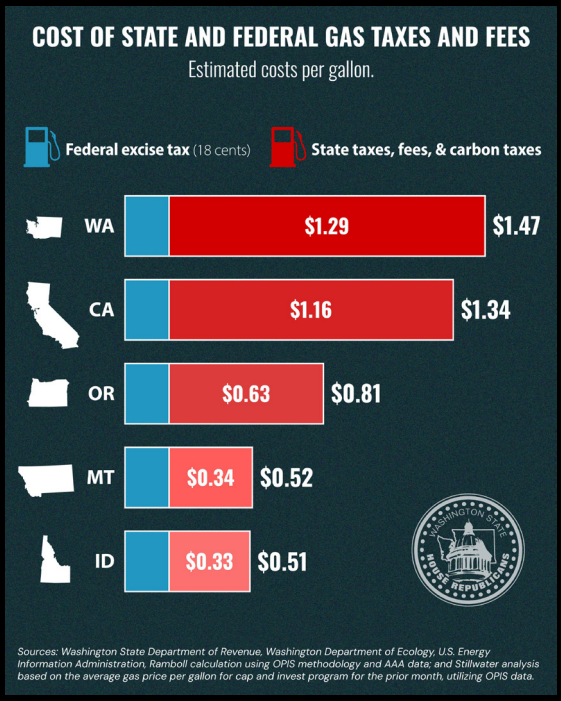
These are the kinds of investments that matter. They improve safety, reduce congestion, and make it easier for people to get where they need to go.

However, how we pay for these projects matters just as much.

House Republicans opposed the gas and diesel tax increases used to fund the 2025-27 budget. Washington drivers are already paying some of the highest transportation costs in the country. Last year, Democrats raised the state gas tax to 55.4 cents per gallon and added automatic annual increases, giving Washington the third-highest gas tax in the nation. On top of that, the Climate Commitment Act is adding an estimated 52 cents per gallon to the cost of fuel.

If Olympia is going to keep asking drivers to pay more, the least it can do is stay focused on the basics. Transportation dollars should go toward maintaining roads, preserving infrastructure, and delivering the projects people were promised — not expanding costs beyond what families can afford.

House Republicans will continue pushing for a transportation system that prioritizes maintenance, keeps commitments, and delivers real value to the people paying for it.



CAPITAL BUDGET

The capital budget is where the state funds projects people can actually see and use. It helps pay for school improvements, public facilities, community spaces, and other local projects that serve a real purpose.

For the 2nd District, that matters. One of the most important parts of this job is making sure our communities are not overlooked and that local needs are reflected in the final budget. That means working to secure practical investments that improve public spaces, support local services, and make a lasting difference close to home.

This biennium, we secured funding for several important local projects, including:

- Bucoda community facility improvements to help preserve an important local gathering place with needed roof, siding, and building system repairs.
- The Tenino Community Service Center to help secure a warehouse facility that supports food access and distribution for rural communities.
- Eatonville High School renovations to improve school facilities and help ensure students and staff have a safer, more functional campus.
- The Nisqually Community Forest to help the Nisqually Tribe acquire 1,300 acres of working forest land and protect it for future generations.
- Benston Hall Senior Center improvements in Graham to replace aging windows and flooring and help keep the center safe and welcoming for local seniors.

These are practical projects that will strengthen local facilities, support essential services, and deliver real benefits to communities across the 2nd District.

2nd DISTRICT STATE LEGISLATOR Andrew Barkis

REP. ANDREW BARKIS

Over the past two years, I have focused on improving two of the most consequential areas of state policy: transportation and housing.

As ranking member on the House Transportation Committee, I spent the biennium directly involved in the House budget-writing process, working to keep major commitments on track, prioritize maintenance and preservation, and make better use of the money drivers are already being forced to pay. That work produced real gains. Republicans stayed at the table and helped shape a transportation budget that protected existing projects, advanced major construction work, and increased public safety funding.

But one of the most important fights remained unresolved. I pushed to free up more than $1 billion in Climate Commitment Act revenue to repave roads, repair aging bridges, and respond to emergency fixes. Democrats refused. Instead, that money remains locked into climate and environmental justice programs while drivers pay some of the highest fuel costs in the country.

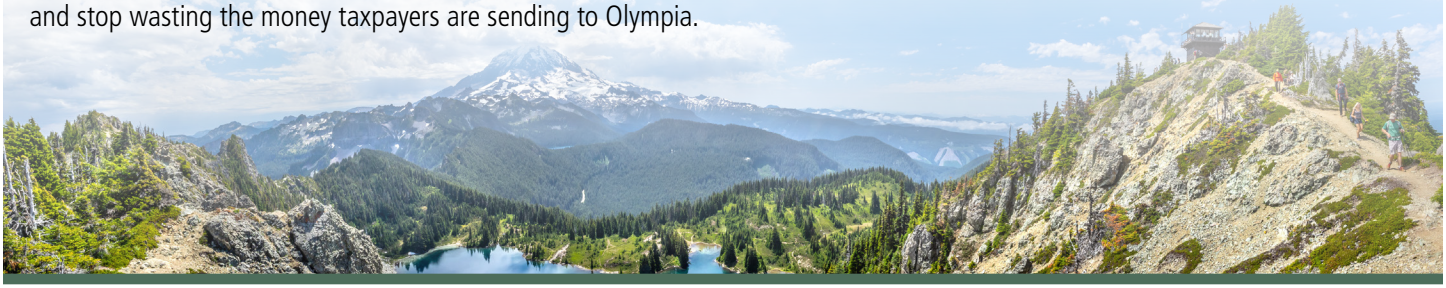
That tradeoff is indefensible. Gas prices in Washington run about 30% above the national average, and the CCA is a major reason why, adding an estimated 52 cents per gallon. What drivers are getting in return is a reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions of 0.0008%. That is not a typo. It is one of the worst deals imaginable, and it is happening while core transportation needs continue to go unmet.

The Fairfax Bridge closure on State Route 165 shows what those failed priorities look like on the ground. The closure cut off vehicle access to part of Mount Rainier National Park, hurt tourism in nearby communities, and forced residents south of the Carbon River onto long detours for work, school, medical care, and essential services. In response, I introduced legislation to treat the closure as an emergency and speed up repairs, and I also introduced a bill to direct CCA revenue toward transportation infrastructure damaged by floods and storms. Those bills did not advance.

Housing reflects the same pattern of misprioritization in government. Washington has some of the highest housing prices in the nation and ranks as the second-worst state to buy a starter home. Regulations add about $164,000 to the cost of a new home, and the state ranks dead last in the nation for the supply of affordable housing per person. Those outcomes are the product of years of bad policy. Mandates, delays, fees, and restrictions pile up long before a shovel hits the ground. The result is predictable: higher rents, fewer starter homes, and more families priced out of their own communities.

As a member of the House Housing Committee, I have worked to streamline permitting, eliminate burdensome red tape, and stop policies that are making the crisis worse. One bill I sponsored that was signed into law this biennium was House Bill 1096, which allows homeowners to divide a residential lot one time, subject to local standards and infrastructure requirements. It is a practical reform that will help create more housing options at a time when Washington desperately needs more supply.

If Washington wants lower housing costs and a transportation system that works, state government has to return to the basics and stop wasting the money taxpayers are sending to Olympia.



2nd DISTRICT STATE LEGISLATOR Matt Marshall

REP. MATT MARSHALL

This session, I spent much of my time fighting policies that would raise costs, expand government, and move decision-making further away from local communities. Whether in committee or on the House floor, I challenged proposals I believe would make life harder for families in our district.

As a member of the Education and Appropriations committees, I opposed a bloated operating budget that grows government while doing little to help working families already stretched thin. I fought proposed K-12 cuts, questioned spending priorities, and pressed for stronger oversight when concerns about fraud and waste surfaced. If taxpayers are being asked to pay more, the least government can do is spend that money responsibly, and that is not happening.

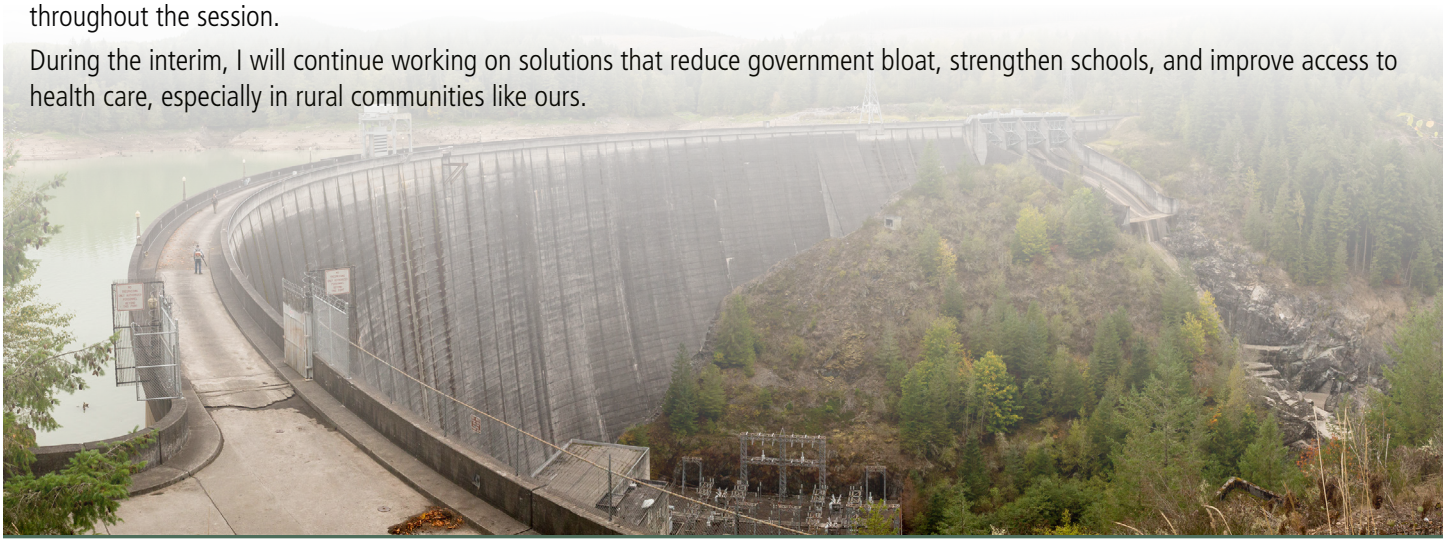
I fought back during the historic 24-hour debate over the Democrats' income tax, raising concerns about affordability and warning that new taxes rarely stay limited. I also fiercely opposed the majority's efforts to shift more power to Olympia by making it easier to remove locally elected sheriffs and by expanding the attorney general's investigative authority.

As assistant ranking member on the House Health Care & Wellness Committee, I also pushed back on policies that could drive up health care costs. That included opposing expansion of the 340B drug discount program. While the program was originally intended to help low-income and rural patients, it has grown into a major revenue source for large health systems, with too little transparency and too few guarantees that savings are actually reaching patients. I opposed expansion until real safeguards are in place to ensure it lowers costs instead of shifting them onto families and taxpayers.

Throughout the session, I also worked to highlight how many of the policies coming out of Olympia ignore the realities facing rural communities. Decisions made hundreds of miles away often fail to reflect the challenges of smaller towns, from workforce shortages and school funding concerns to access to health care and public safety resources. I consistently pushed for solutions that give local communities more flexibility and keep decision-making closer to the people affected.

Even when proposals ultimately passed, I used every opportunity to ask tough questions, offer amendments, and force debate on policies that could have long-term consequences for our district. Fighting for affordability, local control, and responsible spending remained my focus throughout the session.

During the interim, I will continue working on solutions that reduce government bloat, strengthen schools, and improve access to health care, especially in rural communities like ours.



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Representative **Andrew Barkis**
Representative **Matt Marshall**
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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SERVING THE 2ND DISTRICT YEAR-ROUND

Representing the 2nd District does not stop when the legislative session ends. We are here year-round to hear your concerns, answer questions, and help when you are having trouble dealing with state government.

Whether you want to weigh in on legislation, need help with a state agency, or would like one of us to attend a local meeting or community event, please reach out. Hearing directly from the people who live and work here helps us fight for the 2nd District and stay focused on the issues affecting everyday life in our communities.

We are committed to staying as accessible and responsive as possible, and we hope you will reach out whenever we can be helpful.

Rep. Andrew Barkis
(360) 786-7824
Andrew.Barkis@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Matt Marshall
(360) 786-7912
Matt.Marshall@leg.wa.gov

Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

We look forward to hearing from you!