

## Capitol News

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The 2024 Washington State legislative session has officially begun! Legislators wasted no time getting down to business, with hearings on the Governor's supplemental budget and other priority bills this week. Governor Inslee gave his last "State of the State" address on Tuesday, highlighting progress on issues such as climate change and reproductive freedom. He also committed to working with the Legislature to improve the state's behavioral health system and homelessness response.

Democrats continue to hold majorities and the legislative power in the House, Senate, and Governor's office. But this year, the progressive agenda in Washington state may be thwarted by hedge-fund manager Brian Heywood's Let's Go Washington. Pending signature verification, Let's Go Washington has qualified all six of their initiatives to the Legislature, potentially undoing some of the policies Democrats are most proud to have passed in recent years. Initiative topics include police pursuit, taxes, the WA Cares fund, and parental rights in schools.

Revenue is up \$1.2 billion since the budget was adopted in April, with projected collections for the budget (which runs through June 30, 2025) approaching \$66.9 billion. Not included is money raised from the auction of carbon allowances under the state's cap-and-trade program, which has generated \$1.8 billion thus far. Still, budget writers are proceeding with caution on the supplementals, with initiatives challenging the cap-and-trade program and a new tax on capital gains. The capital gains tax, which in its first year raised \$900 million, is also facing a challenge at the U.S. Supreme Court.

### WSLHA Bills of Interest

WSLHA's priority this session is [HB 1655](#), legislation requiring a cost of living increase in reimbursement for contracts between health care providers not employed or affiliated with a hospital and insurance companies.

Its companion bill, [SB 6161](#), was introduced last week. Senators Cleveland, Rivers, Dhingra, Nobles, Short, and Torres are sponsors. We're asking legislators for two things: to hear SB 6161; and to vote HB 1655 out of the House Health Care & Wellness Committee.

We're also watching [HB 2180](#) and [SB 6014](#), bills that would raise the special education cap from 15% to 17.25%. SB 6018 is being heard on Monday and HB 2180 is being heard on Wednesday.