

The 60-day 2024 legislative session adjourned on March 7. Legislators debated several important bills this year, even during this “short session” that lacked the biennial state budget present in odd-numbered years.

Some of the key bills are listed below, along with the votes cast by our legislators in the 40th and 42nd districts.

HB = House Bill SB = Senate Bill

# 2024 legislative session recap

## What passed, what didn't, and how did our legislators vote?

*Dann Mead Smith*

*Dann Mead Smith is the co-leader of Project 42 and co-directs its Future 42 Whatcom Project and is a regular contributor to Business Pulse.*

	42nd LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT			40th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT		
	SENATOR SHARON SHEWMAKE	ALICIA RULE (POSITION 1)	JOE TIMMONS (POSITION 2)	SENATOR LIZ LOVELETT	DEBRA LEKANOFF (POSITION 1)	ALEX RAMEL (POSITION 2)
<b>HB 1589</b> - would ban or limit the use of natural gas for residential and commercial/small businesses, including for existing customers who rely on natural gas for their heat and to prepare food for restaurants.	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>SB 5770</b> would allow local governments to triple property taxes (from the current limit of 1% to 3%) without a vote of the people.	This bill did not come to a floor vote in either the Senate or the House.					
<b>HB 2114/SB 5961</b> would enact statewide rent control. This bill passed the House but not the Senate. Lovelett sponsored the bill, but it did not receive a vote in the Senate.		✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>SB 6191/HB 2276</b> would increase real estate taxes when you purchase or sell a home. Specifically, the bill would have increased the real estate excise tax by 1% on homes priced at over \$3.025 million, though it would mainly negatively affect multi-unit townhomes and condos, since most homes valued at over \$3 million are multi-unit homes used as rental units or condos.	The bill did not come to a floor vote in either the Senate or the House. In the Senate, Lovelett was a bill co-sponsor. In the House, both Ramel and Lekanoff were co-sponsors.					
<b>HB 1932</b> would move local elections to even-numbered years only, rather than holding them in any year (typically odd-numbered years). This bill passed the House but not the Senate. No vote was held in the Senate on this bill, and all four local representatives voted in favor.		✓	✓		✓	✓

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***In addition to the previous bills, six initiatives to the Legislature sponsored by Let's Go Washington were certified by the Secretary of State after sponsors turned in more than 420,000 signatures for each of them. Three of the six received hearings and were eventually passed into law after receiving enough votes in both chambers:***

I-2113 to restore police pursuits. Lovelett voted no, while Shewmake and all four local representatives voted yes.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
I-2081 on parental notification to let parents know about their children's grade school curriculum and some medical procedures. Lovelett, Shewmake Lekanoff, Rule and Timmons voted yes, while Ramel voted no.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
I-2111 to ban state and local income taxes.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
The three that did not receive a public hearing will be on the ballot this November for voters to decide: I-2117 to repeal the cap-and-trade law/Climate Commitment Act; I-2124 to allow workers to opt out of the state-run long-term care payroll tax; and I-2109 to repeal the new capital gains income tax. All four local representatives voted against even holding a public hearing on these three initiatives. The Senate did not hold a formal roll call vote for those three, but neither Sen. Shewmake nor Sen. Lovelett advocated for holding hearings. <b>Business Pulse will analyze each initiative over the coming months, starting with I-2117 in this issue on page 51.</b>						

***Some other key bills also impacted Whatcom County:***

SB 5828/HB 1993, sponsored by Shewmake and Lovelett in the Senate and Lekanoff, Ramel and Timmons in the House, would amend current state water rights law to provide assistance to counties with water rights adjudications by providing more judicial resources.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SB 5827/HB 1992, sponsored by Shewmake and Lovelett in the Senate and Lekanoff, Ramel and Timmons in the House, would add a judge (from four to five) to the Whatcom County Court to assist with additional caseloads and water rights claims in the coming months and years.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HB 2020, sponsored by Timmons, Ramel and Rule, would create a state public infrastructure assistance program to assist the state's emergency management efforts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HB 1978, sponsored by Rule and Ramel, would allow for more collaboration between state and local governments during natural disasters, such as the 2021 Nooksack River flooding.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓