



Independent Insurance Agents  
& Brokers of Washington

## 2023 Washington Legislative Preview

By Bill Stauffacher, IIABW Lobbyist

The 2023 Washington State Legislature convenes on Tuesday, January 10 for its 105-day session with a full agenda of issues that are priorities for legislative Democrats who have majority control of the House and Senate and the Governor's office.

In the 2022 elections, House and Senate Democrats picked up seats – winning races in spite of tough heads winds of an unstable economy, high gas prices, inflation and increased crime. But Democrats performed well with independent voters who voted for them because of the Dobbs decision on abortion rights, concerns about democracy and Former President Trump fatigue.

Now the House Democrats have a 58-40 majority and Senate Democrats have a 29-20 majority. Given the size of the Democrats' majority, they have the ability to advance a progressive-left agenda that spans a significant number of issues. Here are some of their priorities:

- **Budget:** The state is in a strong financial position with about \$3 billion in reserves (about 4% of the state's budget). However, between COLA increases for state employees and increased pay for teachers, much of the reserves will be peeled away to meet these obligations. Expect Democrats to use the budget to fund a number of their major policy initiatives.
- **Homelessness:** Polling done in the state indicates voters believe solving the homelessness crisis should be the legislature's top priority. As part of his budget proposal, Gov. Jay Inslee seeks legislative approval of a plan to issue bonds that generate \$4 billion over a six year period to build affordable housing.
- **Reproductive Rights and Privacy:** Lawmakers are planning to introduce legislation that addresses strict protections of women's health care information and legal protections for women who come to Washington from states that have banned abortions.
- **Workforce Training and Availability:** From the private sector to non-profits and governments, finding workers has been an exceptional challenge. There will be a number of proposals that provides fast-track approval of any state licensure requirements that must be met before one can be hired in the job they seek. Also expect that funding will be directed toward public education, four-year colleges, community colleges and technical colleges to help fund training that's needed to fill available jobs in the workplace.
- **Public Safety:** Expect Democrats to advance proposals that include a ban on assault weapons, making gun sellers liable for selling guns that are later used in crimes and requiring permits for

the purchase of a gun. Additionally, there will be continued review of police reforms passed two years ago.

- **Climate Change:** With hundreds of millions of revenue coming to the state from the newly-implemented cap-and-trade pollution reduction trading market, numerous proposals will be considered that link these revenues to additional carbon reduction legislation.

On the insurance front, IIABW expects to see a wide range of bills that impacts the industry. Legislation that bans the use of credit in insurance underwriting and rating is likely to be introduced. Other topics that may come under consideration include elimination of pre-licensing education requirements, changes to the declaration pages of policies, dog breed underwriting, corporate structure of mutual companies and changes to rebating and inducement laws.