

2022

Action... This Day



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2022 State of the State Address

Governor Jay Inslee

“Action ... This Day”

As prepared for delivery at noon, Jan. 11, 2022
State Reception Room, Washington State Capitol

Hello and welcome, Washingtonians, to a critical year for our state.

We know every day of this legislative session is going to be an opportunity to make good on our commitments and to change the course of our future for the better. We have begun a short session with a long list of things to get done.

I can encapsulate the state of our state very simply – we need action.

We can wake up every morning the next 60 days understanding we need **“action, this day”** – which was Churchill’s first order at the beginning of World War II, but it serves to focus on the many tasks before us.

I would like to start today by thanking our frontline workers, educators and child care providers, and our state employees for all they’ve done the last two years. I want to thank those who administer emergency services and plow the roads to keep Washington moving – unprecedented weather events have demanded much of you already this year, and we are all grateful.

Thank you to the health care workers who have worked tirelessly for two years with little time for rest. You are heroes, and we are grateful for your service.

I am happy to welcome our new members in the Senate – **Yasmin Trudeau** and **John Lovick** – and **Brandy Donaghy** in the House.

My thoughts are also with the family of former state Supreme Court Chief Justice **Mary Fairhurst**, who we lost in December.

And I would like to reiterate our condolences to the family of **Sen. Doug Ericksen**, who we lost after a struggle with COVID in December. He is one of more than 10,000 Washingtonians

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lost to this virus – each one of whose lives mattered. And while we mourn our losses, let us also realize that because of our actions, we have saved thousands of lives.

We still need to contribute to the fight against COVID, that's why attendance here today is limited, and everyone is socially distanced. We're doing everything possible to keep people safe statewide right now: We are increasing access to testing, masking, and helping educators find new ways of doing business. The Legislature has been a strong partner in this pandemic. Last session, they extended 26 emergency orders through the end of the pandemic and made laudable investments in our recovery efforts.

This has been a long effort, but we are undaunted.

Look at all we have done together. If you compare our success to others, we've saved more than 17,000 lives. These people are still with us because of what all Washingtonians have contributed to stay safe and healthy.

It's not an accident that our state continues to be named one of the best places anywhere to live, work and do business.

Since I've had the honor of being governor, we have implemented one of the best paid family leave programs in the country; provided significant new funds to schools under McCleary; passed the best environmental justice legislation in America; passed the Fair Start for Kids Act to protect child care options; and successfully created more ways to connect people to careers beyond just the college path. We came back from disasters such as the Skagit Bridge collapse, the Oso landslide, historic wildfires, heat waves, drought and now unprecedented flooding.

You as legislators have a lot to be proud of. But now we are going to be called upon to do more.

We face a variety and dimension of demands greater than ever as we enter 2022.

We must take **action this day** to keep and strengthen our commitments to those in need right now and in the future. We must take **action this day** to fight the homelessness crisis;

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to reverse social and economic disparities; to educate our children and serve those in foster care; to fund our transportation system; and to protect our salmon and orca. We must take **action, this day**, to fight the threat of climate change that is now hitting us hard.

Over the last year I have met people experiencing homelessness across our state, in Tacoma, Moses Lake, Walla Walla, Seattle and Spokane. We have seen what works to improve people's lives: A private place to live with a sense of dignity. That's why my supplemental budget includes an **unprecedented** \$815 million investment in safe housing for those experiencing homelessness and to create more options for those struggling with housing availability.

This budget would also increase behavioral health services, continuing my administration's successful investments in these life-changing programs.

All of us know that wrap-around services are critical to helping people out of long-term homelessness. It is fundamental that people not only get a roof over their heads but get access to such services. We must provide rapid supportive housing as soon as possible, this year.

We also have to realize we need more opportunities for everyone when it comes to housing. We can't get more housing if there's nowhere to build it.

We must pass legislation that removes antiquated barriers to middle housing options in our cities – such as duplexes and town homes – and provides more housing supply to make it available to all income levels. Look, we cannot tell our constituents we are fighting homelessness and yet not provide ways to build more housing. That means we must allow housing that meets the realities of our tremendous population and economic growth this century. This is also a generational issue: If our children and grandchildren are ever going to afford a rent or mortgage, we need more affordable housing.

My budget also reflects our need to take direct action to reduce poverty. I created a Poverty Reduction Workgroup, made up of people whose lived experiences in poverty could inform our state's actions. Using their recommendations, my budget would create a

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\$125 million reinvestment fund to address economic and social disparities across decades that are the legacy of federal policies that hurt communities of color.

Our communities are suffering in other ways as well, like in our classrooms.

Students have lost opportunities during remote learning despite the best efforts of our educators. To keep schools open, we must invest more to deal with COVID and address learning opportunity loss.

We are committed to having our schools open this year, but the impacts of necessary closures linger. To help make sure educators and students have what they need, I propose reinvesting \$900 million to help schools address students' critical needs.

This proposal further empowers educators so they can innovate to address what kids have suffered through because of COVID, just as they have done throughout the pandemic. Educators, when empowered, can develop solutions to overcome opportunity gaps.

My budget will increase the number of school counselors, nurses, psychologists and social workers available to serve K-12 students. Anyone who works with kids will tell you these services are needed now more than ever.

Young people in foster care and their families have also been uniquely impacted by the pandemic. My budget offers \$80 million to pay providers more for housing and support foster youth with complex needs; and help young people transition out of foster care or juvenile justice.

While we put the pieces together to address the current needs that confront our communities, we also must take **action this day** to address the long-term, existential threats to this state.

In December, I spoke with astronaut **Kayla Barron**, a Richland High School graduate. I was in my kitchen – Kayla was aboard the International Space Station. Kayla is a long way from home right now, traveling at 17,500 miles per hour above us and orbiting the Earth once every 90 minutes, so I was honored she took my call.

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I asked Kayla what perspective this experience gave her about our collective home, our planet. She said something that stuck with me.

Kayla told me she was amazed by how thin our atmosphere is, how at night there is a burnt orange glow at its edge revealing just how paper thin the layer is between a livable world – and nothingness. She said this: “The most important thing we need to survive is the ability to breathe clean air.”

Our planet’s fragile state is clear on the ground as well. Climate change is not merely a graph on a slide deck with an arrow pointed at calamity. It’s found in the eyes of people who saw floods go through their windows in Everson; evacuees who returned to see the charred ruins of their homes in Malden; or the Colville Tribes who lost 600,000 acres of timber to wildfires.

When I look into the eyes of people who have lost their home and see the pain they have, that’s the pain of climate change. We have to do everything we can to fight it. Every corner of the state faces climate-related disasters today. Not tomorrow, but right now. This is the fight for the future of our state. And we need **action, this day.**

My budget builds on the work we’ve done previously and puts \$626 million more toward this noble effort.

Legislators can be proud of the policies they’ve put to work here in our state. And it’s good to know we are not alone in this work.

The world looks to our state as leaders in climate innovation. This was reaffirmed in November at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, where I led a coalition of 68 governments to commit to drastically reduce emissions. Together, we are charting a path to fight climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and get to net-zero by 2050.

It is our state’s legal obligation to reduce emissions – but it is also practical, and most importantly it is a moral obligation. Legislators can be proud their work created policies that will remove 43.5 million metric tons of emissions annually. But to meet our statutory commitment, we have to reduce emissions by 6 million more metric tons per year to reach

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our 2030 emissions limits. **That's equivalent to the annual emissions of 1.3 million vehicles on the road.**

Through legislation, we can rev up this future and make new and existing buildings perform better. We can modernize regulations and incentivize industry to ensure clean energy projects are built here in Washington with living-wage jobs; and make electric vehicles more affordable by giving families thousands of dollars in rebates.

Buildings are the state's second largest source of emissions, and many of them are energy inefficient, wasting resources and costing consumers. With buildings lasting anywhere from 50 to 100 years, we must act now to give Washingtonians more efficiencies and to decarbonize our homes, apartments, offices, retail spaces, and more.

To accomplish this, we have to require gas utilities to chart a path to decarbonize under the Climate Commitment Act. We can improve conditions for developers to grow clean energy resources here in our state.

Look, there's good news here.

We see the future's promise already burgeoning in Washington, at companies like **Evation** in Arlington, where they're making the world's first, all-electric, commuter airplane; **Vicinity Motor Corp** in Ferndale where they're manufacturing electric buses; at the new solar farms popping up like dandelions in eastern Washington; and net zero buildings such as **Climate Pledge Arena** in Seattle and the **Catalyst building** in Spokane. We see clean energy projects built with strong labor standards, growing a broad range of union jobs and apprenticeship opportunities in their local communities, like at the **Rattlesnake Flats Wind Farm** in Adams County.

Now, with all the challenges we face, why do I believe this Legislature is up to the job of fighting carbon pollution?

It's because this is the Legislature that has in its hands the most beautiful place on the planet and the health of more than 7 million people. I know you won't let the people down.

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The same goes for salmon. As the future of salmon goes, so goes the future of our state. Our region's salmon are threatened by climate change, pollution and habitat loss.

My budget would put \$187 million toward salmon recovery.

We must restore the green corridors along rivers and streams known as riparian habitat, which keeps the water clean and cool. Our legislation sets a unique ecological blueprint for each river and stream habitat to conserve and restore these critical lands.

This plan includes the **Lorraine Loomis Act**, named for the Swinomish leader in tribal salmon management, who we lost in August. Lorraine was an inspiration to Washingtonians young and old. She brought us together in favor of salmon.

Our salmon cannot wait. They need **action, this day**.

To realize this future, we must do it together with our partners. Few are as critical in this effort as Washington state's tribal communities. I am introducing legislation that provides a stronger, clearer consultation process for projects that get funding through the Climate Commitment Act. We make progress when we work together.

We also need to invest in our aging transportation system in a way that meets the demands of the future while aggressively decreasing the impacts of climate change from the same system. We need more transportation and less pollution at the same time. That's why my 2022 transportation budget is no ordinary supplemental proposal.

We have a unique opportunity with one-time and new federal funds – along with state money – to provide nearly \$1 billion to fund clean transportation programs and activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector; preserve the infrastructure we have; and support critical investments to improve ferry service reliability. This includes \$324 million to support ferry electrification. We desperately need boats – cleaner boats – to give Washingtonians reliable ferry services.

And to legislators: If you have bigger ambitions or bolder ideas, I am ready to engage, discuss and support your efforts.

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My budget also supports increased diversity and inclusion in the transportation sector by addressing disparities in hiring and recruiting a diverse workforce at those entities.

The broader transportation system remains our number one emitter of greenhouse gases that pollute our air and water and drive climate change. Last session, this Legislature passed historic laws to reduce emissions – including the Climate Commitment Act – and we must not hesitate to take **action, this day**, to implement those laws. We need a clean fuel standard as well.

These laws must go into effect in concert with our transportation budget. And I look forward to working with legislators to do this.

We have proposed necessary and prudent investments this session, but we also have to invest in our financial stability. To assure financial stability, my plan will build the reserve back to pre-pandemic levels in just four years from now. My budget puts \$2.5 billion toward our financial resilience this biennium. Putting this money in our Rainy Day and reserve funds will place our state on better footing for the next emergency.

We just marked the 1-year anniversary of the insurrection in our nation's Capitol. That insurrection continues to this day under the banner of the "Big Lie." The right to representative government is under attack in this country, and in our state.

I am pro-democracy. All elected officials and others who care about our state and nation should be pro-democracy, too. **Former Secretary of State Kim Wyman** deserves our respect for the exemplary and nonpartisan way she carried out her duties in the face of these same threats, and that is why I am so happy to welcome former **Sen. Steve Hobbs as our new secretary of state**. Like Kim Wyman, he will help keep our state and local elections safe and secure.

It is time we stand up to those who challenge the integrity of our elections, who undermine basic democratic principles and who would do away with the rule of law. I call on all legislators, Democrat and Republican, to acknowledge forcefully that the 2020 elections were won fair and square under our Constitution – and to denounce those officials who spread deception that strikes at the foundation of democracy.

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So I think we should outlaw efforts by politicians to knowingly spread lies about elections when those lies result in violence – violence we have already seen in state capitals and our nation’s capital.

As we close today, I will reiterate that this may be a “short session,” but it is unlike any in our history. We must act according to what this moment demands. We must be big. We must be bold. We must act at a scale commensurate to our challenges because of the multiple, urgent crises facing our state.

Too much is at stake. I am confident we can do this – because I have seen the Legislature rise to the moment before. But we must take **action, this day**.

We will continue to build our resiliency against COVID. We will meet the challenge of climate change while building the clean energy future with good jobs here in Washington. We will restore our children’s opportunities. We will make necessary revisions to our long-term care bill and our police accountability measures. We will protect salmon and bring back our orca. We will house those impacted by homelessness and behavioral health conditions and provide more affordable housing options for everyone.

This is our charge. We can do this if we act together.

There is no time to lose. We can start now by taking **action – this day**.

Thank you.

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