

Sermonti Public Affairs 2023 Legislative Session Update

February 27, 2023 — 50th Legislative Day

The 105-day Washington state legislative session is nearing the halfway point.

The first round of committee deadlines occurred on February 17 and 24, which was the last stop for many bills this session, but about 1000 are still alive and moving.

Quick facts – 2023 session:

- **2011 bills were introduced** in the House and Senate since the pre-file period opened December 4, 2022.

- **1108 bills** advanced from House and Senate policy committees prior to the February 17 cutoff deadline

- **368 bills** advanced from House and Senate fiscal committees (Appropriations, Ways & Means, Transportation) prior to the February 24 cutoff deadline

As of today, **there are 574 bills in House Rules**, awaiting a potential pull to a floor vote; **there are 298 bills in Senate Rules** awaiting the same potential action.

April 23: last day of regular session

Lay of the land

Budget writers have communicated throughout the session that they do not plan on making major spending cuts or increases, instead largely asking about program efficacy and outcomes. This has seemed to cause many policy bills to get “skinnyed” down to reduce the cost – or not advance at all. The state economic and revenue forecast in March will be the final estimate of what fiscal flexibility and resources the budget committees and leadership will have to craft the final state budget proposals for the next two years. The chambers will release their budget proposals towards the end of March.

The major themes of this legislative session have remained consistent around previously passed police reform legislation, a permanent solution to drug possession laws due to the Supreme Court *Blake* decision, affordable housing via state-mandated residential zoning changes and permitting reform, maintaining K-12 funding mandated from the *McCleary* decision, and waste management/extended producer responsibility legislation.

In this first totally in-person session since 2020, bills affecting these issue areas have continued to move through the process, with a relatively high degree of bipartisan collaboration that could be reflective of last November’s elections. Democrats extended their majorities in both chambers of the legislature; while Republicans believed through the election cycle that they would have a chance to win a majority in the House – which did not turn out to be the case.

Of course, the last 55 days of the regular session will tell if these collaborations start to falter, as

we are now seeing fissures between moderate, liberal, and progressive Democratic members starting to emerge.

Looking forward - session timeline

Wednesday, March 8 will be the next cutoff date for the session, known as the “House of Origin cutoff”. After that point, bills that have not been voted out of the chamber they were originally filed in will most likely be dead, except for bills that are ‘necessary to implement the budget.’ No bill is truly ever dead until the final adjournment of a session.

Session Calendar:

<https://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Documents/2023%20Cutoff%20Calendar.pdf>