

Legislative Update Fall 2025

As I write this, the new biannual budget has just been passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. The budget “process” is long and excruciating, especially when one party controls the legislature and the other party is in the governor’s mansion.

The process starts when the governor proposes a budget for the next two years, shortly after the new legislature takes office in January. It is an extensive, very detailed document, tens of thousands of words long. The legislature then reviews it and makes changes they would like to see; again, a very detailed and complex process where every word must be carefully considered.

Understand that the budget process allows (both sides) the unique opportunity to insert (sneak) sometimes controversial or unpopular provisions into law without the extensive process required of a stand-alone bill.

Normally there are ongoing negotiations between the two parties to work out a compromise budget that is supposed to be completed before July first. If that doesn’t happen, the current budget remains in effect. In this case, because the governor’s budget was so different from what the conservative legislature could accept, those negotiations broke down and legislators drafted their own version of the budget. However, they still had to come up with a budget that the governor was willing to sign.

Eventually, the budget for 2025-26 was passed and signed.

I don’t have all the details of the final budget, but I can confirm that the approximate doubling of hunting license fees in the governor’s budget was removed by the legislature and is not part of the final budget. That’s not to say that fees won’t go up at some point, but now they will be decided individually as separate bills that go through the normal legislative committee and hearing processes.

The governor’s budget proposal also included several provisions that further restrict firearms ownership and sales, as well as offering several concessions to the tribes. However, I haven’t been able to determine to what extent any of these were confirmed or removed, or of any last minute “surprises” included in the budget bill.

However, now that the budget work is finally completed, legislators will resume drafting individual bills. We will watch carefully for any affecting bowhunting.