



## Republican lawmakers focus on achievements, work still to be done



11 HOURS AGO • BY [SHARI PHIEL](#)

The 7-cent increase in gas taxes set to take effect Saturday isn't the only cost to drivers to come out of the recent legislative session.

Along with the tax and \$85 million for the Industrial Way/Oregon Way rail corridor project, the transportation package passed by the Legislature in early July includes

increases in vehicle licensing fees.

"I don't think people are aware of how upset they're going to be," state Rep. Ed Orcutt said at a Daily News editorial board interview Tuesday.

Orcutt, R-Kalama, said passenger vehicle registration fees are going up \$15 to \$35 beginning Aug. 1. Those rates will go up again in 2022.

Orcutt was joined by his fellow 20th District legislators Sen. John Braun and Rep. Richard DeBolt for a review of the past session Tuesday.

Among the top issues for the Republican lawmakers was education funding. The Attorney General's Office on Monday submitted its report to the state Supreme Court, claiming the court should drop its contempt of court order against the Legislature because enough progress has been made in funding basic education.

While he couldn't speak to the details of the report yet, Braun, R-Centralia, said he agrees the state has come a long way.

"I think we've made a lot of progress. ... We've met the timeline established by law," Braun said.

That doesn't mean there isn't work still to be done. Braun said the dependence in some areas on local levies to bolster teacher pay needs to be resolved.

"It's a very complicated problem, both policy-wise and politically," Braun said.

As for capital projects for school districts, DeBolt, R-Chehalis, said the Legislature is actually ahead of schedule.

"Not only did we meet the court's needs, we have to have the classroom to put (students) in, and we've already started that process by putting a big commitment in class size reductions," DeBolt said.

There's no word yet on when the high court will make its ruling.

Republican legislators don't appear to be worried about the Environmental Protection Agency stepping in with more stringent water quality standards, which could impact local industries.

DeBolt said the House and the Senate were able to agree on some legislation, such as banning certain flame retardants in kids' products but did not pass legislation related to the governor's proposed fish consumption policies.

"We could be surrounded by two (states) with more stringent standards than us. That probably bodes well for a lawsuit to be filed," DeBolt said. "But I do think it will resolve itself next session."

The legislators said it would be unusual for a federal agency to intervene while the Legislature is still working to resolve the issue.

One other area of particular concern for Orcutt is legislative changes for medical marijuana patients.

"There are people who for very legitimate reasons use marijuana for medicinal purposes. I thought the restrictions were too great," Orcutt said.

Even though it's illegal to bring marijuana across state lines, Orcutt said he thought marijuana sales numbers in Washington would likely see a slight decline once recreational marijuana sales in Oregon ramp up.