



Battle Ground's first student arts ambassador promotes music

CLARK COUNTY, A3

New play covers American dreams, realities

LIFE, B1



# The Columbian

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## B.G.'s school levy falls short



AMANDA COWAN/The Columbian  
A demonstrator holds a sign as Battle Ground Public Schools supporters rally Jan. 28 near Prairie High School in support of the district's replacement levy. Voters on Tuesday were rejecting the district's four-year, \$189.51 million levy.

Washougal and Hockinson funding measures pass

By BRIANNA MURSCHER and DOUG FLANAGAN  
The Columbian

Battle Ground Public Schools' third attempt to pass its levy failed in Tuesday's election.

School funding measures in Hockinson and Washougal passed.

Battle Ground's replacement educational programs and operations levy would have col-

lected \$189.51 million over four years with a tax rate of \$1.99 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The measure received 11,283 "no" votes (51.53 percent) to 10,614 "yes" votes (48.47 percent), according to Clark County's elections office.

"We've been in this place before, so we know that this is a percentage that is unlikely to get us past the finish line, but we'll continue to hope," Battle Ground Superintendent Shelly Whitten said. "In the meantime, we will plan as though we need to cut \$20 million from our budget and get some input on how to do that."

The levy would have funded security officers, smaller class sizes, special education, teachers, nurses, counselors, mental health support, sports and extracurriculars.

The district's two levy attempts last year in February and April failed to garner the simple majority required to pass. The previous operations levy expired at the end of 2025.

As a result, the Battle Ground School Board approved a 2025-26 district budget with \$14 million in cuts in August, including the elimination of 116 full-time staff positions, middle school

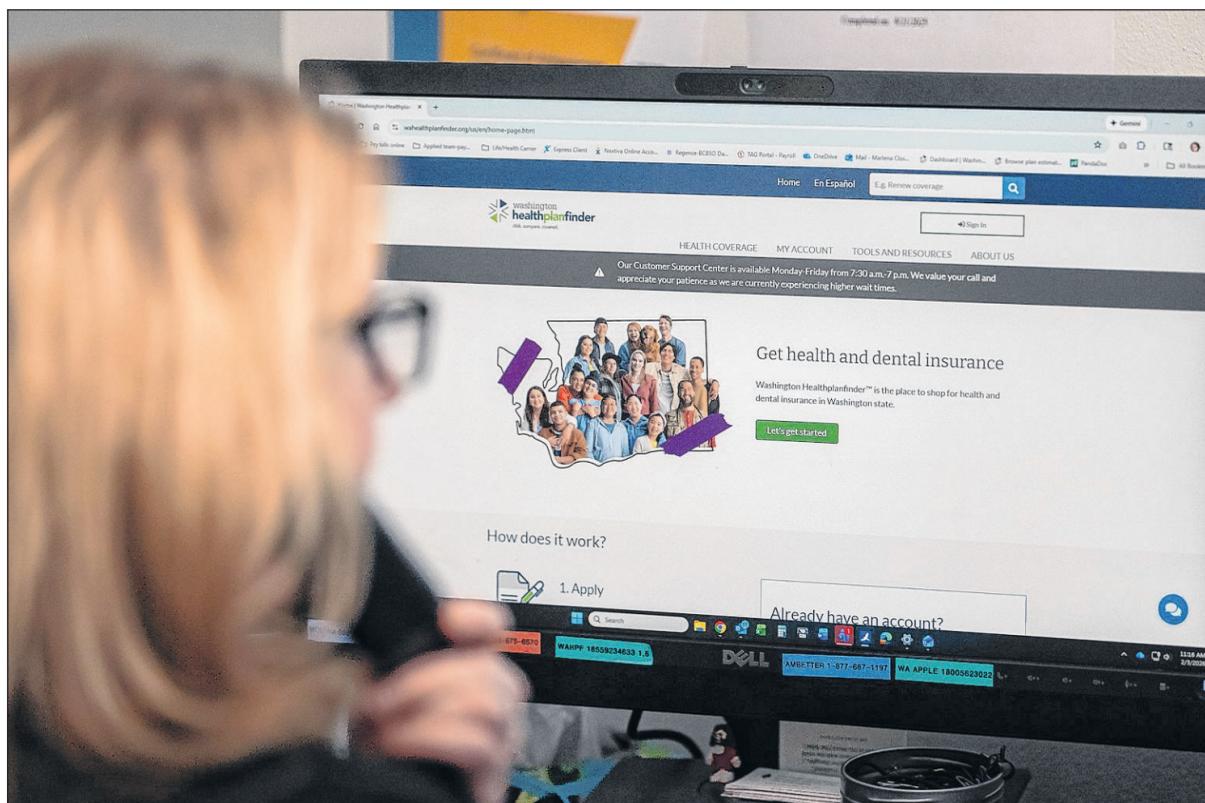
ELECTION, Page A2



### SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVIES

Battle Ground		
Proposition 10		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	10,614	48.47%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	11,283	51.53%
Hockinson		
Proposition 11		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1,907	56.35%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	1,455	43.65%
Washougal		
Proposition 14		
	Clark County	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	2,541	60.16%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	1,683	39.84%
	Districtwide	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	2,757	58.46%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	1,959	41.54%
Proposition 15		
	Clark County	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	2,530	59.88%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	1,695	40.12%
	Districtwide	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	2,742	58.12%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	1,976	41.88%

## Health tax credits' loss hits hard



Photos by AMANDA COWAN/The Columbian  
Marlena Close of Applied Team Insurance logs into her computer while checking her voicemail in Hazel Dell on Feb. 3. Preliminary data from the Washington Health Benefit Exchange shows this year's insurance enrollment is down by 38 percent, or 28,000 people.

82% of Clark County residents had federal benefit in 2025; this year it's 66 percent

By KIMBERLY CORTEZ  
The Columbian

Many Clark County residents lost federal tax credits that lower premiums for health insurance coverage through the Affordable Care Act, according to preliminary data from the Washington Health Benefit Exchange.

In 2025, 82 percent of Clark County residents received federal premium tax credits compared to this year's 66 percent, according to the exchange.

"I had people in tears leave my office more than I ever have," said Rachel Lauser, co-owner of Vancouver-based Applied TEAM Insurance, an authorized Washington Health Benefit Exchange Enrollment Center. "These are middle-income people that no longer can afford their health

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care. I've never seen that ever in my life, where I didn't have a solution at the moment that was affordable."

The Washington Health Benefit Exchange report provides initial data about customers who selected health and dental plans during open enrollment, which started Nov. 1 and ended Jan. 15.

More than 290,000 Washingtonians either selected or were automatically reenrolled in a qualified health plan during open enrollment. Final numbers in the spring will show a significantly lower number because many cus-

HEALTH CARE, Page A2



Marlena Close of Applied Team Insurance checks her voicemail in Hazel Dell on Feb. 3. Preliminary data from the Washington Health Benefit Exchange shows 15 percent of Clark County residents lost federal premium tax credits to help lower the cost of health insurance premiums for coverage through the Affordable Care Act.

### VOTER TURNOUT 34%

### LEGISLATURE

## Data center measure advances

WA lawmakers aim to regulate facilities, protect power grid

By ASPEN FORD  
Washington State Standard

With data centers expected to become the largest source of electricity demand in the Pacific Northwest, Washington legislators are pressing ahead with a bill aimed at protecting the grid and offsetting potential hikes for utility ratepayers.

House Bill 2515 passed out of the Appropriations Committee on Monday afternoon, with two Democrats and all of the Republicans on the panel opposed. Reps. April Berg, D-Mill Creek, and Larry Springer, D-Kirkland, cast the two Democratic "no" votes. The bill next awaits a floor vote in the House and still needs Senate approval.

"These policies seek to protect ratepayers by ensuring new data centers are picking up the whole tab for new growth," said Rep. Beth Doglio, D-Olympia, who is the bill's lead sponsor and

LEGISLATURE, Page A2

Bondi tangles with Democrats during congressional hearing

NATION & WORLD, A8



Kimora Ross adds to her Evergreen basketball legacy

SPORTS, B7



John M. Crisp: 3 things Trump just can't unsay

OPINION, A4

