

# Pay freeze for Inslee, lawmakers this year; pay hike in 2022

A citizen panel approved a 1.75% increase for executives, legislators and justices 17 months from now.

- By [Jerry Cornfield](#)
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OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee will not get a raise this year. Neither will state lawmakers, Supreme Court justices or statewide executives like the attorney general and secretary of state.

In 2022 they will.

A citizen salary-setting panel voted Wednesday to forgo pay hikes this July for the state's executive, legislative and judicial branches due to continuing economic uncertainty wrought by the pandemic.

Then the independent commission approved a 1.75% wage hike effective July 1, 2022, for all positions in the three branches of government.

Commissioners expressed optimism that the economy would be improving by then and they wanted to prevent the pay scale of Washington's elected officials from falling too far behind counterparts across the country.

The decisions mean Inslee's annual salary, currently \$187,353, will rise to \$190,632. Lawmakers who now earn \$56,881 will make \$57,876. The House speaker and Senate majority leader, along with minority leaders in each chamber, receive an added stipend for their leadership responsibilities.

With next year's increase, Attorney General Bob Ferguson will earn \$175,274, Secretary of State Kim Wyman \$136,996 and Chief Justice Steven Gonzales \$227,410.

Adjustments to the level of pay of elected members of the three branches are considered every two years by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. Members include a resident randomly selected from each of the state's 10 congressional districts, plus representatives from business, organized labor, higher education, the legal world and human resources. In all, there are 17 members.

# What state officials are paid

Chart

|                              | 2021      | 7/1/2022  |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Supreme Court chief justice  | \$223,499 | \$227,410 |
| Supreme Court justices       | \$220,320 | \$224,176 |
| Court of Appeals judges      | \$209,730 | \$213,400 |
| Superior Court judges        | \$199,675 | \$203,169 |
| District Court judges        | \$190,120 | \$193,447 |
| Governor                     | \$187,353 | \$190,632 |
| Attorney general             | \$172,259 | \$175,274 |
| Treasurer                    | \$153,615 | \$156,303 |
| Supt. of public instruction  | \$153,000 | \$155,678 |
| Commissioner of public lands | \$153,000 | \$155,678 |
| Insurance commissioner       | \$137,700 | \$140,110 |
| Secretary of state           | \$134,640 | \$136,996 |
| Auditor                      | \$132,212 | \$134,526 |
| Lieutenant governor          | \$117,300 | \$119,353 |
| Speaker of the House         | \$64,881  | \$66,016  |
| Senate majority leader       | \$64,881  | \$66,016  |
| House minority leader        | \$60,881  | \$61,946  |
| Senate minority leader       | \$60,881  | \$61,946  |
| Legislator                   | \$56,881  | \$57,876  |

SOURCE: Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials

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Voters established the commission in 1987 to stop politicians from deciding their own pay. Commissioners are supposed to base decisions on the duties of the job — not the man or woman doing it at the time. They can check out what other states pay for similar posts. They don't have to give raises, but they cannot lower the salary of anyone in office.

Two years ago, the panel boosted the base pay of elected positions and, on top of that, added a cost-of-living adjustment for 2019 and 2020. That resulted in

the governor and legislators getting raises last July when state employees got furloughs and hundreds of thousands of workers were jobless because restrictions, ordered by Inslee to arrest the spread of coronavirus, forced businesses to scale back or shut down.

Until Wednesday, commissioners were on course to impose no increases for two years to assess the effects of the pandemic on the economy and state budget.

But Wednesday they received updates which show the state's tax receipts stabilizing, with expectations of growth in the next two-year budget.

That gave nine members enough confidence to approve the 1.75% increase — after the panel rejected hikes of 3% and 2%.

“I think it is reasonable. I think it is fair,” said Commissioner Anastasia Potapova, who backed the higher increases. She said she felt Washington officials are underpaid compared to their peers and the commission needs to do what it can to help them catch up.

Commissioner Diane Gale echoed the sentiment. “If salaries are low now and we stop them for two years from now,” we'll be in worse shape, she said.

Giving a “modicum of a raise” would be nice, but if it is too big it “is not going to look very well” to the populous, cautioned Commissioner Jon Bridge.

Gary Ratterree, the commission vice chairman, opposed increases because the impact of the pandemic on the economy is too cloudy.

”I am really concerned about the uncertainty in the data in the forecast,” he said.

The salary schedule will take effect 90 days after its recording with the Secretary of State's Office.

The pay hikes are subject to repeal by referendum. To force a statewide vote requires someone to file a petition with the secretary of state, then collect and turn in the signatures of 162,258 registered voters. The deadline is based on when the schedule is filed.

*Reporter Jerry Cornfield: [jcornfield@heraldnet.com](mailto:jcornfield@heraldnet.com) / [@dospueblos](https://twitter.com/dospueblos)*

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