

Washington State Standard

WA lawmakers and governor are getting big raises. Here's how much

A citizen panel approved hikes of 16% for legislators and 14% for the governor spread over two years. Increases kick in July 1, barring a referendum.

BY: [JERRY CORNFIELD](#) - FEBRUARY 5, 2025 5:05 PM



(Getty Images)

Washington's governor, attorney general and state lawmakers are in line for hefty pay raises in the next two years.

And salaries for the state's seven other executives and hundreds of judges will climb as well — though not as fast — as a result of decisions Wednesday by the independent citizen commission that sets pay scales for the state's legislative, executive and judicial branches.

Legislators will get a 16% wage hike and the governor and attorney general will receive a 14% raise under the new salaries approved at a meeting in Tumwater by the Washington Citizens Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials.

Commissioners agreed every position should receive a cost-of-living adjustment of 3% on July 1 and 2% a year later. Then they tacked on extra for lawmakers and the two executive posts.

Dollars and cents

Legislators, who currently earn \$61,997 annually, would receive a total 9% increase in July, bringing their pay to \$67,688, and 7% a year later, pushing their salary to \$72,494. Leaders of the four caucuses will continue to earn more because they receive a stipend for added responsibilities.

Gov. Bob Ferguson and Attorney General Nick Brown will get 7% raises in each of the next two fiscal years — a big jump from [the 5% increase over two years](#) that commissioners [proposed in October](#). The changes approved Wednesday will push Ferguson's annual wage from \$204,205 to \$234,275 and Brown's from \$193,169 to \$221,614.

Washington's seven other executives — lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state auditor, superintendent of public instruction, insurance

commissioner, treasurer and commissioner of public lands would get cost-of-living adjustments only.

Judges, including state Supreme Court justices, would receive boosts totaling 4% in July and 3% a year later.

Elected officials and judges cannot alter what the commission approves and the Legislature and the governor must fund the pay changes in the budget.

When the salary schedule is filed with the Secretary of State's Office, there will be a 90-day period in which a referendum can be filed. If none is filed, the salaries will become law.

Commissioners said Wednesday, [as they have throughout the process](#), they didn't think pay for legislators and those two statewide executives had kept pace with inflation and, more importantly, the growing demands of the jobs.

If legislator salaries are too low, people like working parents, small business owners and young adults will feel they cannot afford to serve in what is intended to be a citizen Legislature. If they do make it into office, they may be unable to devote as much time to their duties because they cannot afford to miss time at their day job.

"If we want to encourage them to be connected to their constituencies, we have to give them more time to do that," said Commissioner Kirsten Barron.

But [commissioners](#) had their limits. A motion to boost legislators' pay an additional \$10,000 was overwhelmingly defeated due to concerns of a negative public reaction.

"If we go too far too fast on this, it's going to sink the whole thing," said Commissioner Erik Arnold.

Jon Bridge, the commission chair, said they have to be mindful of the looming budget shortfall and how the public might react to what they perceive as too large of an increase. A successful referendum means the entire salary schedule “goes out the window” and no increases for members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches for two years.

Wednesday’s hearing was the panel’s fourth since first [proposing a schedule](#) in October.

Voters established the salary commission in 1987 to end the practice of politicians deciding their own pay. Though funded by the state, it operates independent of the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

Its [17 unpaid members](#) include residents randomly selected from the state’s 10 congressional districts plus representatives of business, organized labor and higher education. Also represented are the legal and human resources professions.

Every two years this panel comes together to consider salary changes. Commissioners are supposed to base decisions on the duties of the job — not the man or woman doing it at the time. They don’t have to give any raises, but they cannot lower the salary of anyone in office.

The final salary schedule approved by the Washington Citizens’ Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials.



2025 – 2026 Final Salary Schedule

Position	Current Salary	Salary Effective 7/1/2025	Salary Effective 7/1/2026
<i>Executive Branch</i>			
Governor	204,205	218,744	234,275
Lieutenant Governor	127,851	131,687	134,321
Secretary of State	150,085	154,588	157,680
Treasurer	167,432	172,455	175,904
Attorney General	193,169	206,923	221,614
Auditor	150,085	154,588	157,680
Supt. of Public Instruction	166,762	171,765	175,200
Insurance Commissioner	150,085	154,588	157,680
Commissioner of Public Lands	166,762	171,765	175,200
<i>Judicial Branch</i>			
Supreme Court Chief Justice	255,495	265,792	273,819
Supreme Court Justices	251,861	262,011	269,924
Court of Appeals Judges	239,755	249,417	256,949
Superior Court Judges	228,261	237,460	244,631
District Court Judges	217,337	226,096	232,924
<i>Legislative Branch</i>			
Legislator	61,997	67,688	72,494
Speaker of the House	70,717	75,688	80,494
Senate Majority Leader	70,717	75,688	80,494
House Minority Leader	66,357	71,688	76,494
Senate Minority Leader	66,357	71,688	76,494

Information about the components follows:

Cost of living adjustment for all statewide elected officials of 3% in 2025 and 2% in 2026.

Executive Branch:

- Increase the salary of Governor and Attorney General by 4% in 2025 and 5% in 2026.

Judicial Branch:

- Increase the salary for positions by 1% in 2025 and 1% in 2026.

Legislative Branch:

- Increase the salary by 6% in 2025 and 5% in 2026 to recognize that salaries have not reflected the increased time responsibilities that legislators work.
- Maintain the \$8,000 dollar difference for the Speaker of the House and Senate Majority Leader roles and \$4,000 dollar difference for the House Minority Leader and Senate Minority Leader roles.



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