

Washington voters want their lawmakers working all year long, poll finds

BY: [GRACE DENG](#) - JUNE 17, 2024 2:28 PM



Washington State Capitol (Laurel Demkovich/Washington State Standard)

Most Washington voters want their lawmakers to be at the Legislature in session during the entire year, according to a [new poll](#) from the Northwest Progressive Institute, a non-profit based in Redmond.

Of the 615 voters polled, 59% said they would support changing the Washington Constitution to allow the state House and state Senate to be in regular session year-round. The Constitution currently limits odd-year sessions to 105 days and even-year sessions to 60 days. The Legislature or the governor can call a special session, but those can't last longer than 30 days.

These session limits might have worked back when they were first put in place, said Andrew Villeneuve, executive director of Northwest Progressive Institute, but now Washington has a much larger population, with much more complex needs.

“We’re now a state of over seven million people,” Villeneuve said. “We’re a bustling state. We have a lot of challenges because of our growth and growing pains. So we should have a Legislature that’s meeting year-round to address all those issues, instead of trying to cram all the work into 60-, 105-day sessions.”

While Washington’s 60-day short session is often considered a time crunch, neighboring Oregon has a short session of just 35 days. Some legislatures [meet for an even shorter time of about six weeks.](#)

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, [10 states have legislatures that meet year-round](#), including Alaska, Hawaii and California.

Villeneuve pointed out that Washington’s lawmakers often spend the interim preparing for the next legislative session anyway.

“Our legislators are already effectively working full time, but they’re not allowed to meet full time, nor are they being paid for their full time work. That needs to change,” he said.

Villeneuve hopes the idea catches on with both parties and said a year-round Legislature could benefit the minority party in particular, as the majority party tends to prioritize its own legislation before cutoff deadlines.

States with year-round legislatures often have breaks to allow legislators to go home and campaign, but lawmakers can generally craft policy on a less hectic schedule. In part-time legislatures like Washington’s, policy can “die” due to tight deadlines to get policy through certain parts of the legislative process.

“Why does [policy] have to die? What’s the point? Right? The only reason that we have the cutoffs now is to manage the chaos of the session, because we’ve imposed these 60- and 105-day constraints,” Villeneuve said.

“But if those constraints go away, then presumably you can also get rid of the cutoff for policy, which means the policy can be considered year-round. There’s not this mad dash,” he added.



Our stories may be republished online or in print under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. We ask that you edit only for style or to shorten, provide proper attribution and link to our website. AP and Getty images may not be republished. Please see our [republishing guidelines](#) for use of any other photos and graphics.



GRACE DENG

Grace Deng joined Washington State Standard shortly after graduating from Northwestern University in June 2023 and reported for the Standard through November 2024. Grace is a local Washingtonian who was born and raised in Snohomish County. She has previous experience covering statehouse politics and policy for the Minnesota Reformer and the USA TODAY Ohio Network, which includes the Columbus Dispatch, the Cincinnati Enquirer and the Akron-Beacon Journal.

MORE FROM AUTHOR

<https://washingtonstatestandard.com/briefs/washington-voters-want-their-lawmakers-working-all-year-long-poll-finds/>