

January 14, 2019

105-day session kicks off January 14th with ceremonies and bills

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The 66th Legislature convened Monday, January 14, 2019, with Democrats holding majorities in the House and Senate and in the Governor's Office. Monday kicked off with swearing in a large group of new members, with family and friends invited to attend the festivities. Usually reserved for Presidential year elections, the turnover in both chambers – and with both parties – was significant in 2018, with large freshman classes in both the House and the Senate. On Tuesday at 11:30 a.m., Governor Inslee will deliver an address to a joint session of the Legislature, when he is expected to focus on his policy and budget priorities.

The Senate Democrats have a new, [highly diverse leadership team](#), led by Spokane Democrat Andy Billig, and both [House Republicans](#) and [Democrats](#) made a few changes to leadership at their reorganization meetings late last year. And, in a surprise move, Speaker Frank Chopp announced that this will be his final session as Speaker of the House, setting off a “Game of Thrones”-like jockeying for this position next spring.

If anyone had any doubts that the first week would be slow to start, the nearly 300 bills (298 to be exact) that were filed in advance of Monday's opening date demonstrate that these legislators are ready to get going. Here's the lists of [House](#) and [Senate](#) introductions. The first week includes a mix of work sessions and bill public hearings, including previews and testimony on Governor Jay Inslee's proposed operating and capital budgets in both the House and Senate.

New Faces, New Places

The House is welcoming 23 new members, while the Senate has six new members. In the House, Republicans held 10 open seats in the 2018 general election, Democrats held 6 open seats and won 7 races previously held by Republicans. In the Senate, five new Democrats will sit in one of the Senate seats that changed in 2018. This weekend Senator Kevin Ranker of Anacortes announced he was resigning from the Senate, so a Democratic replacement will be named for the 40th legislative district.

While new rosters aren't out yet (the Legislative Information Center says they should be **live** once members are sworn in), there are many office changes. Please use the [roster link](#) to locate where your legislators now may be doing business. Phone numbers remain the same for legislators returning to Olympia and, in good news for Contact Lists, new legislators take over their predecessor's phone numbers. And, legislative contacts remain the same for email: firstname.lastname@leg.wa.gov.

Members aren't the only things new this year. Committee schedules are different, and several new committees have emerged. Both the House and Senate have placed an emphasis on mental health and homelessness, and the House has switched topical areas in committees, such as energy, tribal affairs, and economic development. For those tracking education committees, they now meet every day of the week. Committee lists are public now, so use this [link](#) to find House and Senate committees, staff, reports, etc.

Status of Top 5 Legislative Priorities (all bills may be accessed [here](#))

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - SB 5082 would create an SEL committee to promote and expand SEL.
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - Over the interim the Joint Legislative Task Force for Improving State Funding for School Construction held public meetings, toured school sites, and debated recommendations. The [final report](#) was issued in December and makes recommendations aligned with WSPTA's position on school construction.
 - SJR 8201 would ask the public to vote on a constitutional amendment to allow bonds to pass by simple majority.
- Preventing Gun Violence:
 - HB 1010 would revise firearms and dangerous weapon provisions giving the Washington state patrol the option to destroy a forfeited firearm.
- Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos plans to reintroduce a teacher shortage bill from last session, [HB 1827](#). It will have a new bill number.
- Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Legislators are poised to consider changes to local levies and possibly local effort assistance. The drastic changes required under a "\$1.50/\$1000 assessed value or \$2,500 per student, whichever is less," have left most school districts with significantly less local, flexible funding. Working alongside changes to levies is the need to protect and increase, if possible, local effort assistance (LEA), which provides state funding to districts in areas where state property values lag or are less than the state average assessed property value.
 - Governor Inslee proposed returning to a straight 28% of state and federal funding, with LEA at half of what a district passes;
 - OSPI plans to propose a 22% of state and federal funding, with additional requirements to access LEA.
 - Several proposals floating around now include one supported by WSPTA, which is to give school districts the choice of \$1.50 or \$2,500, eliminating the "whichever is less"; increasing the \$1.50/\$1000 AV; or increasing LEA in districts with fewer than 2,000 students.
 - Number two, after levies, legislators say this is the year to put additional investments in special education funding.

- The Governor adopted OSPI’s proposal, which would set up a tiered approach of funding based on the percentage of time students with special needs spend in a general education class.
- Senator Wellman told the State Board of Education on January 9th that she would like to learn how easy it would be for districts to switch to this model, indicating some reluctance to adopt this approach, so it’s possible a hybrid will emerge.
- At least one legislator has said he will introduce a bill to support changes to the High-Poverty LAP formula, decreasing the school building percentage from 50% to the state average (around 43%).
- Governor Inslee, OSPI and several legislators are all discussing increasing education positions that support enhanced ratios for school counselors, nurses, social workers, family and community engagement coordinators, and psychologists.
- This may be the year to start introducing the concept of “high mobility” students, particularly in relationship to the school staffing issue as a starting place for phasing in limited funding.

Look for bills and committee hearings that relate to WSPTA’s “Also Supported Positions” adopted at Legislative Assembly and WSPTA resolutions below and in the Bill Tracking List.

WSPTA’s Week in Review

Coming next week!

The Week Ahead (Schedule subject to change)

Monday, January 14

1:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Work session on education roles and responsibilities.

3:30 p.m., House Appropriations, HHR A

Public hearing:

- HB 1109 – making 2019-21 biennium operating appropriations (Governor’s proposed operating budget)

Tuesday, January 15

8 a.m., House Capital Budget, HHR B

Work session: Joint Legislative Task Force on Improving State Funding for School Construction, report review

10 a.m., House Civil Rights & Judiciary, HHR A

Public hearing:

- HB 1010 – concerning the disposition of forfeited firearms by the Washington State Patrol.

1:30 p.m., House Health Care & Wellness, HHR A

Public hearing:

- HB 1074 - protecting youth from tobacco products and vapor products by increasing the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco and vapor products to age 21.

3:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Work session on education roles and responsibilities.

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- Governor's 2019-21 operating budget

Wednesday, January 16

1:30 p.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Work session on Career Connect Washington.

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- Governor's revenue package

Thursday, January 17

8 a.m., House Education, HHR A

Work session: Education reform efforts

1:30 p.m., House Capital Budget, HHR B

Public hearing:

- HB 1102 – concerning the capital budget (Governor's proposed capital budget).

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- Governor's 2019-21 capital budget

Friday, January 18

8 a.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- SB 5082 – creating a committee to promote and expand social emotional learning.

8 a.m., Senate Health & Long-Term Care, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- SB 5057 – protecting youth from tobacco products and vapor products by increasing the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco and vapor products to age 21.

Olympia [Capitol Campus Map](#)

HHR refers to hearing rooms in the John L. O'Brien Building

SHR refers to hearing rooms in the John A. Cherberg Building