

Braun asks commission to reconsider 18 percent raise for lawmakers

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State Sen. John Braun on Monday urged a state commission to reconsider a nearly 18 percent raise proposed for legislators.

There are “simply many greater and higher uses for taxpayer dollars than the proposed substantial raise for elected officials,” the Centralia Republican said in a letter to the Washington Citizens’ Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials.

The commission determines the pay rates for statewide elected officials, state legislators and some judges. The commission released a two-year salary proposal in October and has since been holding public hearings throughout the state before a final vote on Feb. 4.

The commission is considering an 8.8 percent raise for state legislators in 2019, followed by another increase by the same amount in 2020. That translates to an increase in lawmaker salaries from nearly \$49,000 in 2018 to \$57,000 in 2020. To give a \$8,000 pay raise to all 147 members of the Legislature would cost nearly \$1.2 million, not counting social security tax and other costs.

“It’s important that the pay for state legislators is enough to attract people from all walks of life, but the level of increase is way out of line with what private-sector workers receive,” Braun said in a press release. “The proposal adds short- and long-term costs at a time when taxpayers expect us to invest in our priorities like mental health treatment and serving people with developmental disabilities.”

Braun represents the 20th District, which includes the cities of Kalama, Woodland and Castle Rock, most of Lewis County and small parts of Thurston and Clark counties.