

# Commission approves pay raises for Washington judges, governor, lawmakers and others

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**Monday's votes by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials drew the ire of anti-tax activist Tim Eyman, who is vowing a referendum that would put the raises before voters this November.**



By

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OLYMPIA — For the third time since the Great Recession, the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials handed out raises Monday to statewide elected officials, judges and lawmakers.

The commission's votes — which included some sizable pay bumps — drew the ire of anti-tax activist Tim Eyman, who has vowed a referendum that would put the raises before voters this November.

In addition to raising base salaries by varying amounts, the commission approved cost-of-living adjustments for all those positions of 2 percent in 2019 and another 2 percent in 2020.

The raises came as part of the commission's regular salary adjustments, which occur every other year. The commission, established in 1987, was created by a state constitutional amendment as a way to remove politics from the setting of salaries.

Made up of 17 appointed members from different regions of Washington, the commission holds the sole authority to set pay — and commissioners can't reduce elected officials' salaries.

Their decisions followed a series of meetings that examined officials' job roles, wages for similar positions in other states and economic data.

For state lawmakers, the commission approved raises of \$3,000 for 2019 and another \$3,000 for 2020.

That means in 2020, rank-and-file lawmakers will earn \$56,881 a year, up from their current salary of \$48,731. Legislative leaders will make several thousand dollars more.

(Legislators are additionally [allowed to collect \\$120 in daily expenses](#) during the legislative session.)

Judges — who include state Supreme Court justices and judges sitting on appeals, superior and district courts — also got big raises. The commission approved raises of 8.5 percent for 2019 and 2.5 percent for 2020.

Those raises were geared toward keeping judicial salaries close to the pay scales for federal judges, commissioners said.

For instance, that will bring state Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst's 2020 salary to \$226,589, up from the current \$193,162.

A trio of statewide elected officials — Gov. Jay Inslee, Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Treasurer Duane Davidson — will get \$1,500 raises in 2019 and again in 2020.

Inslee's salary will be \$187,353 by 2020, up from the current \$177,107. Ferguson in 2020 will have a salary of \$172,259, up from his current \$162,599.

Davidson will earn, \$153,615 in 2020, compared to \$144,679 this year.

A few statewide officers got bigger pay bumps. The commission cited Secretary of State Kim Wyman's work on [cybersecurity election issues](#) as a reason to increase her pay by 2020 to \$134,640. Wyman now earns \$124,108.

Commissioners also mentioned increased duties as a reason to increase pay for Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal.

By 2020, the base pay for each will hit \$150,000, up from the current salaries of \$138,225 and \$136,910, respectively.

The commission also doled out raises in [2015](#) and [2017](#) after keeping pay frozen for years during the Great Recession.

This time, the commission lowered some of its raises from its initial recommendations. The commission had originally considered a 2.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for 2019 and 2020. And commissioners discussed a 10 percent raise for judges in the first year, before slimming that to 8.5 percent.

Eyman, who faces a lawsuit by Ferguson alleging that the initiative activist [broke campaign-finance laws](#), spoke at Monday's public-comment section of the salary meeting, reading what he said were citizens' messages protesting the raises.

To qualify for a referendum, Eyman would need to gather 129,811 valid signatures within 90 days after the salary changes are filed with the Secretary of State's Office, according to a spokesman for that office.

The salary commission poured "gasoline on the fire of enthusiasm for our Give Them Nothing referendum," Eyman wrote Monday in an email. "We will work really hard to let voters decide politicians' massive salary bonuses in November."

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