

State's top elected officials to get pay raises after commission vote. Eyman vows to fight

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The state's top elected officials will see pay raises after a vote by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. ELAINE THOMPSON AP

The citizen commission that sets the salaries of high-ranking statewide officials, legislators and judges gave all of them pay increases this year and in 2020. The base salaries of statewide elected officials will increase by a variety of percentages. Legislators will receive a \$3,000 increase in their base pay July 1 and another \$3,000 in 2020. For the judges, it's an 8.5 percent increase in their base salaries on July 1 and 2.5 percent one year later. Raises for the executive branch include 6 percent over two years for Gov. Jay Inslee, 13 percent over two years for Lt. Gov. Cyrus Habib and 6 percent over two years for Attorney General Bob Ferguson. The panel voted to decrease a proposed 2.5 percent cost of living increase to 2 percent this year and in 2020 for those officeholders in the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

The salary increases could come under attack from longtime initiative promoter Tim Eyman.

Eyman said despite receiving hundreds of emails from residents opposed to salary increases, the commission handed them out like "candy." "They listened to the politicians' pleas and ignored

the people,” Eyman said in a statement. “But all they did was pour gasoline on the fire of enthusiasm for our ‘Give Them Nothing’ referendum. We will work really hard to let voters decide politicians’ massive salary bonuses in November.” The Washington Citizens’ Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials has constitutional and statutory authority to enact pay raises. The commission voted to increase the salaries of:

- Gov. Jay Inslee from \$177,107 to \$182,179 on July 1, and to \$187,353 in 2020.
- Lt. Gov. Cyrus Habib from \$103,937 to \$111,180 on July 1, and to \$117,300 in 2020.
- Secretary of State Kim Wyman from \$124,108 to \$130,560 on July 1, and to \$134,640 in 2020.
- Treasurer Duane Davidson from \$144,679 to \$149,103 on July 1, and to \$153,615 in 2020.
- Attorney General Bob Ferguson from \$162,599 to \$167,381 on July 1, and to \$172,259 in 2020.
- Auditor Pat McCarthy from \$124,108 to \$128,120 on July 1, and to \$132,212 in 2020.
- Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal from \$136,910 to \$145,860 on July 1, and to \$153,000 in 2020.
- Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler from \$126,555 to \$132,600 on July 1, and to \$137,700 in 2020. ▪ Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz from \$138,225 to \$145,860 on July 1, and to \$153,000 in 2020.

Legislators will see their salary jump from \$48,731 to \$52,766 on July 1, and to \$56,881 in 2020.

The following leadership positions also will have their pay hiked:

- Speaker of the House and Senate Majority Leader from \$57,990 to \$60,766 on July 1, and to \$64,881 in 2020.
- House and Senate Minority Leaders from \$53,360 to \$56,766 on July 1, and to \$60,881 in 2020.

For the judicial branch, there would be the following pay increases:

- Supreme Court Chief Justice from \$193,162 to \$216,728 on July 1, and to \$226,589 in 2020.
- Supreme Court justices from \$190,415 to \$213,646 on July 1, and to \$223,369 in 2020.
- Court of Appeals judges from \$181,263 to \$203,377 on July 1, and to \$212,630 in 2020.
- Superior Court judges from \$172,571 to \$193,265 on July 1, and to \$202,434 in 2020.
- District Court judges from \$164,313 to \$184,359 on July 1, and to \$192,747 in 2020.

Ten members of the 17-person commission are randomly selected from the state’s congressional districts. The other seven are appointed by the lieutenant governor or the House Speaker and come from various professions, including legal, human resources, organized labor and business.

The commission on Monday approved the increases one-by-one, with panel members offering brief rationales for their positions. For example, commissioner member Don Robinson said he favored a 2 percent cost of living adjustment this year and in 2020 instead of 2.5 percent because he's concerned the nation is "easing into a recession." Reached for comment on the governor's raise, an Inslee spokeswoman responded with a letter that the governor's chief of staff, David Postman, sent to the commission last October. In that letter, Postman said the governor's salary was less than those of the University of Washington president (\$734,000), Vancouver city manager (\$239,000), director of the Office of Financial Management (\$193,800) and only slightly above the salary of the Olympia city manager (\$174,168) and director of the Health Care Authority (\$169,332). "Based off these comparables, we believe the governor's current salary is within an appropriate salary range and that the process you will go through for determining salaries for the upcoming biennium will yield a consistent result," Postman wrote. "Given your past performance with setting salaries, we are more than confident in your ability to keep the salary in line with other public officials."

Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, told the commission in a letter Monday that he opposes the increase to Habib's salary. Schoesler noted that Habib gets a pay raise on the days that Inslee is out of the state "This convenient perk provides him with a 70 percent salary bonus every time he performs this largely ceremonial duty. And this temporary salary bump is not infrequent. In fact, through at least November of last year, the lieutenant governor stepped into the acting governor role 44 times — that is 44 days of receiving almost double his standard pay rate." If Inslee pursues the Democratic nomination for President, that additional pay for Habib will increase, Schoesler said.

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