

Barring a referendum, WA elected leaders will receive hefty pay hikes in July

BY: [JERRY CORNFIELD](#) - MARCH 17, 2025 4:01 AM



Washington State Capitol (Laurel Demkovich/Washington State Standard)

Only one thing could delay, and possibly derail, pay raises for state elected officials this year: a referendum.

A citizen commission [approved a new salary schedule](#) for members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches last month that provides [double-digit pay hikes](#) for the governor, attorney general and state lawmakers

The schedule, filed with the secretary of state's office last month, [will become law](#) on May 13 with increases taking effect on July 1 this year and next.

But a referendum could spoil the timing.

Should someone launch such an effort, they will need to collect and turn in valid signatures of [at least 154,455 registered voters](#) by May 13 to qualify the referendum for the November ballot.

If successful, the raises will be put on hold until voters decide whether to approve or reject the entire salary schedule.

The [Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials](#) agreed to give members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches a cost-of-living adjustment of 3% on July 1 and 2% a year later.

Commissioners tacked on more for a few individual positions.

Legislators, for example, will get an additional 6% in the first year and 5% in the second year, to give them a 16% hike overall. With those increases, a lawmaker's salary will be \$72,494 in two years. Leaders of the four caucuses will continue to earn more because they receive a stipend for added responsibilities.

Raises for the governor and attorney general will total 7% in each of the next two fiscal years. That will boost annual wages for Gov. Bob Ferguson to \$234,275 and for Attorney General Nick Brown to \$221,614.

Judges, including state Supreme Court justices, will receive increases totaling 4% in July and 3% a year later.

Washington's seven other executives — lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state auditor, superintendent of public instruction, insurance commissioner, treasurer and commissioner of public lands will get cost-of-living adjustments only.

People have started down the referendum path before, a salary commission official said. Those efforts in 1987, 1991 and 2019 failed to reach the ballot.



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