

Wednesday, December 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes
Hilton Vancouver Washington, 301 W 6th Street, Vancouver, WA 98660
TEAMS – Meeting ID: 245 801 094 949, Passcode: kF2q7jT7

The meeting of the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials was brought to order by Jon, Chair, at 6:00 p.m.

Jon read a land acknowledgement, stating the Commissioners are meeting in the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary land of the Chinook, Cowlitz, and Klickitat Tribes of Peoples. The Commission acknowledges and respects the Indigenous individuals and communities who live on this land now, and those who were forcibly removed from their homelands. In offering this land acknowledgement, the Commission affirms Indigenous sovereignty, history, and experiences.

Commission Members Present:

Andrea, Vice Chair – via TEAMS
Carli – via TEAMS
Debbie
Ellen – via TEAMS
Erik, Vice Chair
Jason – via TEAMS
Jon, Chair
Kirby
Lancer – via TEAMS
Linda
Melody – via TEAMS
Nicholas

Sarah– via TEAMS
Steve
Stu

Commission Members Excused:

Sue

Commission Members Unexcused:

Kirsten

Staff Present:

Teri Wright, Executive Director
Lindsay Matthews, Executive Assistant

Teri took roll call.

Jon read the meeting opening statement.

Lindsay went over meeting folders and their contents.

Nicholas moved to approve the November 14, 2024, meeting minutes. Erik seconded.
The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote, with Erik and Carli abstaining.

Public Testimony

Jon welcomed Matthew Guzman. He thanked the Commissioners for taking public input. Mr. Guzman shared that he watched previous meetings and heard that nearly every presenter shared the same sentiment, that the compensation is simply too low, the responsibilities are high and that puts a big financial burden on themselves and their family. He went on to say he believes many people could not run for an elected official position simply because it doesn't pay enough. They went to school and are well educated, and their peers are making double or triple what they make as an elected official. He said that as a citizen he doesn't expect an elected official position to be a volunteer position. He shared that he would expect a Governor to be paid an equivalent to what they would make in the private sector for the set of skills. He shared that the difference of salary in the private sector versus the public sector is vast, and his fear is that many people with the set of skills needed for the elected officials' positions would say they can not afford to run for office due to the salary, and we as a state are losing out on talented people in office. He went on to say that a five to six percent increase is not enough in his opinion. He said he would expect a 50% to 100% increase for some of the positions. He specifically said the Governor's salary is too low at \$200,000 a year to run a massive budget, with a massive set of employees is a huge responsibility. He went on to say if the pay were more competitive the talented people running for office would increase. He also heard the Legislators say they must make compromises in seeing constituents while needing to work a second job. He said we are putting ourselves at a disadvantage by not paying them enough. Mr. Guzman said that he is not saying that the current elected officials aren't of high quality but that by paying a competitive wage there would be a larger pool to quality people to choose from. He would like the Commissioners to look at the salary schedule and consider if they will simply add five to ten percent each year, and is that enough? Mr. Guzman doesn't think that is enough. In conclusion, he said you get what you pay for, and if the elected officials are paid a good wage, you will get a higher quality set of elected officials, and we will have a better, stronger democracy. He thanked the Commissioners for hearing him and asked if they had any questions.

Jon thanked Matthew for his testimony.

Commissioners moved into a work session. Commissioners talked about the 5% differential in the Judiciary. They looked over the page included in their meeting folders, showing the bottom-up approach to the differential, the top-down approach, and not continuing the 5% differential. Jon would like to look at the bottom-up approach as opposed to the top-down approach. Discussion ensued. Commissioners voiced agreement that the difference in the differential of top-down increases versus bottom-up increases, or not maintaining the differential is very

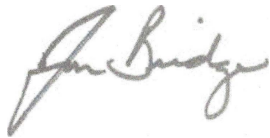
minimal. Lancer shared that he believes looking at the lowest court and giving them the largest raise is the best practice. He likes the bottom-up differential, and thinks it is important to continue to keep the differential. He shared that as time goes on if the Commission doesn't keep a differential the gap will grow increasingly wide. Jon suggested the Commission just add an increase to all levels instead of keeping the differential. Debbie added that with no differential there could be compression. Discussion continued around differentials, comparable salaries nationally, and cost of proposed increases in total dollars as well as the proposed salaries in total dollars.

Teri shared with Commissioners that the Governors office has sent out a directive with a freeze on travel for all agencies that report to the Governor's office and how it could affect the Salary Commission.

Jon asked if there was any other business that needed to be discussed prior to adjournment.

Steve moved to adjourn the meeting; Linda seconded.

The meeting was adjourned by Jon at 6:48 p.m.



Jon, Chair

1/8/2025

Date