



2021 SESSION – GENERAL LEGISLATIVE RECAP

WEEK OF MARCH 12, 2021

This is the **61st** day of the **105-day** session.

This week we had the cutoff of bills to move from the House of origin for all bills except those that deal with fiscal impacts. We are more than halfway through the legislative session. The next cutoff for bills to move from the **Opposite House Policy Committee** is on **Friday, March 26**, followed by the **Opposite House Fiscal Committee** cutoff on **Friday, April 2** and the cutoff for bills to **pass out of the Opposite house** which is **Sunday, April 11**.

Below is a summary of what occurred this week for your general update.

RECENT REVENUE FORECAST POSITIVE

The latest revenue [forecast](#) by the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council (ERFC) stated revenue collections since the November forecast are \$593 million (9.0%) above expectations. Here are some of the highlights in the report:

- **1.3% increase in Washington employment** this year which is down from the 3.5% increase in the November forecast.
- **Above average growth** through the **remainder of the forecast** as the economy recovers from the pandemic-induced recession.
- **Employment growth** to average **2.2% per year** in 2022 through 2025 compared to the 1.7% average rate expected in November.
- Private services-providing sectors lost 7,400 jobs in November, December, and January, weighed down by the loss of 19,900 jobs in leisure and hospitality.
- **State and local government employment increased by 3,900 jobs**. Federal government employment declined by 3,200 jobs.
- **Washington's unemployment rate** reached **7.1% in December**, up from 5.7% in November. This was the first increase in the state's jobless rate since July.

**GOVERNOR INSLEE MOVES WASHINGTON INTO PHASE 3 STARTING MARCH 22, 2021 &
NEW ELIGIBILITY FOR COVID VACCINE**

Starting **Wednesday, March 17**, everyone in **Phase 1B, Tier 2** will be **eligible for their COVID vaccine**. This includes workers in agriculture, food processing, grocery stores, public transit, firefighters and law enforcement, among others. Phase 1B, Tier 2 also includes people over the age of 16 who are pregnant or have a disability that puts them at high-risk. This doesn't preclude any of the prior eligible people, they can still receive the vaccination if they haven't gotten it yet.

On Thursday March 11th, Governor Inslee [announced](#) plans to **move all of Washington State to Phase 3** in his **“Healthy Washington: Roadmap to Recovery.”** More guidance is expected next week for specific industries. The following changes will take effect on **March 22, 2021**:

- **50% occupancy, or 400 people**, whichever is lower, at **all outdoor facilities**, as long as physical distancing and masking are enforced.
- **All indoor spaces**, including restaurants, gyms, movie theaters and others, can increase capacity to **50% occupancy, or 400 people**.
- **Larger event venues** can have up to **25% capacity, or 9,000 people**, whichever is lower.
- **Outdoor sporting facilities** (professional & High School) with permanent seating move up to **25% capacity** for spectators.

COUNTY SIZE	INDICATOR	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
Larger County	New cases per 100,000 population per 14 days	> 350	350 - 200	< 200
	New COVID hospitalizations per 100,000 population per 7 days	≥ 10	9.9 - 5	< 5
Smaller County (< 50k people)	New COVID cases over 14 days	≥ 60	59 - 30	< 30
	New COVID hospitalizations over 7 days	> 5	4.9 - 3	< 3



TEXAS FEDERAL JUDGE RULES CDC'S PANDEMIC EVICTION MORATORIUM UNCONSTITUTIONAL

In late February Judge Barker, from the Eastern District of Texas, issued a 21-page ruling in response to a lawsuit from a group of landlords and property managers. "The federal government cannot say that it has ever before invoked its power over interstate commerce to impose a residential eviction moratorium," Judge Barker wrote. The CDC eviction ban will remain in effect through March 31 while the case works its way through the legal process. This [link](#) gives more information about the impacts of this ruling and what is being worked on here in Washington State.

EXPIRATION DATE FOR INDIVIDUAL, NON-MEDICARE COVERAGE PURCHASED THROUGH WSHIP ELIMINATED

[HB 1096](#) had a public hearing on March 10th just before the cutoff and on March 12th was voted out of Senate Health and Long-Term Care. This healthcare bill **removes the December 31, 2022, expiration date** for non-Medicare coverage offered through the Washington State Health Insurance Pool (WSHIP). The costs of coverage through WSHIP are paid through premiums and assessments on health insurers.

WSHIP has approximately 200 enrollees in individual, non-Medicare coverage, and 1100 enrollees in Medicare coverage. After December 31, 2022, individual, non-Medicare coverage will no longer be offered through WSHIP.

