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Washington State's all-mail ballot primary election is August 7. Washington uses a top-two primary system in which the two candidates receiving the most votes move onto the general election, regardless of party affiliation. As all ballots are cast by mail or in ballot drop-off boxes, it could take several days (sometimes weeks) for the outcome of close races to be clear. A primary election update will be sent to you shortly after primary election results begin to emerge.

Below is a summary of political and legislative highlights in Washington State over the past month.

### **Business & Labor**

#### *Tourism Marketing Efforts*

Washington State recently created a nine-member Tourism Marketing Authority Board. The board will oversee a newly established fund to promote Washington State tourism. This is a direct result of a [bill](#) unanimously passed in both chambers during the 2018 legislative session. Tourism in the state is estimated to bring in more than \$21 billion annually.

#### *Preparing for Automated Workforce*

During the recent National Governors Association (NGA) meeting, Governor Inslee (D) was selected to continue his role as the co-chair of the NGA Education & Workforce Committee. Among other things, Inslee's role as co-chair will include strategizing regarding the use of automation and artificial intelligence to ensure they have a positive impact on the workforce and economies of all 50 states.

#### *Domestic Workers Rights Passed in Seattle*

On July 23, the Seattle City Council unanimously passed new labor protections for domestic workers, such as nannies and house cleaners. As noted in this Associated Press [article](#), eight other states have already passed similar laws that ensure domestic workers receive minimum wage, proper breaks and other protections.

### **Health Care**

Washington State launched a [Health Care Compare website](#) as part of an effort to provide more transparency to health care costs. The site uses the state's All-Payer Claims Database to provide the public with online access to health care prices and quality data. Twenty states currently have these types of databases. Of those twenty, only six of them have made the data accessible online like in Washington.

## **Transportation**

Roger Millar, the Washington State Department of Transportation Chief, is pointing towards housing availability as a significant factor in the traffic problems faced by drivers on the I-5 corridor. As explained in this Associated Press [article](#), Millar believes lack of housing is forcing workers to live further from their places of employment, resulting in crowded roadways during commute times.

## **Behavioral Health**

Washington State's Dept. of Commerce (DOC) awarded \$2.3 million for an inpatient behavioral health facility in Bremerton. The facility will create a new 16-bed treatment and evaluation center for those experiencing severe psychiatric episodes and will treat those who can be admitted involuntarily. One new bed also will be added to an existing Bremerton center. As noted in this Associated Press [article](#), the overall project is expected to cost \$6 million and the Legislature will be asked to help with funding.

Similarly, Mason County was awarded \$1.94 million by the DOC for a 16-bed psychiatric residential treatment facility in Shelton. The facility will allow stays up to 100 days and is expected to help transition patients out of Western State Hospital, which has been plagued with safety concerns for several years.

## **Environment**

### *Recreational Water Quality Standards*

The Washington State Dept. of Ecology (DOE) is going through a proposed rule change to update marine and fresh recreational water quality standards. The public is invited to provide input on new methods being considered to assess state waters. These changes were the outcome of recommendations made by members of regulated industries, environmental groups and tribes. More information about this process can be found on this DOE [webpage](#) dedicated to the proposed rule change.

## **Transportation**

### *DOT Asking for Public Input*

The Washington State Dept. of Transportation is asking for public input. Through August 9, the public is invited to comment on I-405 improvements as explained [here](#). Public transit users in several counties have been asked to fill out a [community transit survey](#) and [social services provider survey](#) regarding use in Kitsap, Clallam, Mason and Jefferson counties. Both surveys are open through August 21.

## **Education**

As reported in this *Yakima Herald* [article](#), a recent study revealed that Washington State colleges lead the nation for training teachers of color. You can view the study by the Urban Institute [here](#), which points out that a diverse teaching staff correlates with higher success rates of minority students.

## **Gun Responsibility**

Rep. Tina Orwall's (D-Des Moines) work to reform juvenile justice firearm laws has received increased attention after the recent death of a Kent police officer, as noted in this KOMO News [article](#).

## **Law & Justice**

There has been a 90% drop in marijuana felony convictions since recreational marijuana was legalized in Washington State through a ballot initiative in 2012. But, as reported in this [KUOW article](#), the Washington Assoc. of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs has cited a need for more resources to address black market marijuana grow operations in the state.

## **Elections Security**

Washington State is strengthening its cyber-security for elections. As explained in this [Seattle Times article](#), Washington State's elections are considered some of the most secure in the nation due in part to its all-mail ballot system, which leaves a paper trail of every vote cast.

## **Ballot Initiatives**

Signatures for initiatives to qualify for the ballot were due to be turned into the Secretary of State's (SOS) office on July 6. You can view [here](#) a complete list of initiatives to the people in 2018 filed with the Secretary of State's office. Signatures are currently being validated by the SOS to determine which initiatives qualified for the November ballot.

## **Important Dates**

- Senate Assembly Days – November 14 & 15
- House Assembly Days – December 3 & 4
- Joint Assembly Days (House & Senate) – December 5
- First day of the 2019 legislative session – January 14
- Scheduled last day of the 2019 regular legislative session – April 28