



## 2021 SESSION – GENERAL LEGISLATIVE RECAP

**WEEK OF FEBRUARY 26, 2021**

This is the **47<sup>th</sup>** day of the **105-day** session.

The House and Senate are currently on the floor debating and voting on bills to pass out of the House of origin by **Tuesday, March 9**.

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

### **WA STATE'S FELONY DRUG POSSESSION LAW STRUCK DOWN**

The Washington Supreme Court on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> **struck down the state's felony drug possession law** because it doesn't require prosecutors to prove that someone knowingly or intentionally possessed drugs. The ruling came from the case of a Spokane woman who had received a pair of pants from a friend which unknowingly to her contained a bag of methamphetamine in a pocket. This ruling could possibly result in hundreds of thousands of convictions to be vacated. Legislators are scrambling to see if there could be legislation that could be introduced this late in session to address related consequences such as officers' ability to perform investigations. View this Seattle Times [article](#) for more information

### **SWEET DRINKS TAX**

Senator June Robinson prime sponsored [SB 5371](#) which will **fund public health services and health equity initiatives** through a statewide **sweetened beverage tax**. Beginning October 1, 2021, a **tax of \$0.0175 cents per fluid ounce** is imposed on sweetened beverages distributed in the state by a person engaged in the business of distributing sweetened beverages. For sweetened beverages produced from concentrates, the tax is calculated using the largest volume of beverage that would typically be produced by the amount of concentrate. It did not pass out of committee but should be considered alive as it could be Necessary to Implement the Budget (NTIB).



### NATIVE AMERICAN NAMES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Representative Lekanoff, who is a member of the Tlingit tribe, introduced [HB 1356](#) which passed off the House Floor with a 92-5 vote. This bill **prohibits public schools from using Native American names, symbols, or images** as school mascots, logos, or team names. It establishes exceptions to the prohibition if certain requirements are met, including consultation with and authorization by, the applicable tribe or tribes. It also allows for the phasing out of uniforms or other materials bearing Native American names, symbols, or images as mascots, logos, or team names if specified requirements are met. 1356 will now move to the Senate where it will await a public hearing.

### VOTER ELIGIBILITY FOR CONVICTED FELONS

[HB 1078](#) would **restore voter eligibility** for all persons **convicted of a felony offense**. Specifically, it replaces the two-step approach of provisional and permanent restoration of a person's voting rights after a felony conviction with a process where voting rights are automatically restored for a person convicted of a felony when he or she is not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections. It would also remove provisions authorizing the revocation of provisional restoration of voting rights upon failure to pay legal financial obligations. After some passionate debates on the House Floor, it passed largely along party lines with a 57-41 vote.

