



2021 SESSION – GENERAL LEGISLATIVE RECAP

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 5, 2021

This is the **26th** day of the **105-day** session.

Monday, February 15 will be the first cutoff date of the 2021 session. It will be the **last day to pass bills out of committee and in house of origin**, except for House fiscal committees, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation Committees. **Monday, February 22** is the cutoff of bills to pass the fiscal committees and **Tuesday, March 9** is the House of Origin cutoff, where bills must be voted out of the House and Senate.

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

STANDARDIZED HEALTH PLANS

On February 4th there was a public hearing on [SB 5377](#) in Senate Health and Long Time Care. It establishes, subject to availability of funds, a **premium assistance program for individuals purchasing health insurance** on the Health Benefit Exchange (Exchange) as well as network participation and hospital reimbursement rates for public option plans. It would also require carriers to offer all the standardized plans designed by the Exchange and limits the number of non-standardized plans a carrier may offer.

An individual would qualify for this program by being a resident of Washington State; have an income up to 500 percent of the Federal poverty level; be enrolled in the lowest cost bronze, silver, or gold standardized plan offered in their county; apply for and accept all advanced premium tax credits; be ineligible for minimum essential coverage through Medicare, Medicaid, or Compact of Free Association islander premium assistance; and meet other criteria established by the Exchange. No executive action has been scheduled at this time.

SPORTS WAGERING AT CARD ROOMS AND RACETRACKS

Senator King and Senator Lias co-sponsored [SB 5212](#) which would **authorize sport wagering** through **sports pools** and **online sport pools by licensed card rooms** and racetracks as well as restricting any sports wagering website and mobile application to only allow wagering at that card room or racetrack complex. SB 5212 had a public hearing on Thursday, February 4th in Senate Labor, Commerce, and Tribal Affairs.

Senator King and other proponents raised the point about creating new revenue for Washington State with the bill's proposed 10% tax on gaming revenue. Opponents to the bill shared skepticism about the amount of money to be generated and questioned the motives of the proponents who they felt were unlikely to invest into their communities. This bill has not been scheduled for executive action at this time.

FOUR WA SENATORS FORM "FREEDOM CAUCUS"

On February 4th, Republican Senators Doug Ericksen of Ferndale, Mike Padden of Spokane Valley, Phil Fortunato of Auburn, and Jim McCune of Graham announced the formation of the **Freedom Caucus**. In an interview with the Olympian linked [here](#), Senator Ericksen speaking in regards to what spurred the creation of this caucus, "**was that Republican caucuses in the Senate and House of Representatives refused to force a special session by denying the governor his proclamations last year.**" While all the current members of the Freedom Caucus are Republicans, Senator Ericksen refers to the caucus as a big tent and that anyone, including Democrats, are welcome to join it.

SENATOR BRAUN ASKS FOR FENCES TO COME DOWN AROUND THE CAPITOL CAMPUS

The Senate Republican Leader, John Braun of Centralia, recently sent a letter to Governor Inslee asking him to **remove the security fences on the Capital Campus that have been up since the start of the 2021 session**. In the letter, linked [here](#), Senator Braun denounces the protesting in front of the Governor's Mansion and other elected officials residences but does not see the need for security fences that block the public's access to their elected officials offices in the Legislative Building and other buildings around the Capitol Campus. He further suggests allowing the peaceful assembly of the public between the Temple of Justice and the Legislative Building, citing it as a "traditional public forum." He ends the letter with a line that is reminiscent of President Reagan, "please take down the fences..."

