



WASHINGTON STATE

I am for the child™

2017 Legislative Update Intro 1/16/2017

Hi all:

Welcome to the 2017 Legislative Session. Things are going to get pretty busy pretty quickly. These updates will be weekly for the first few weeks of the session; then tapering off as we get further into session and the action dies down. The first legislative cutoff date is Friday, February 17th – bills need to have been voted out of committee by then in order to proceed.

CASA Advocacy day is scheduled for February 7th. Please plan on attending if you can make it. [For more information and to sign-up, click here.](#)

Like the past couple of sessions, the Republicans control the Senate, and the Democrats control the House. Among other things, this means that committee chairs are from the party that controls each house, as is the majority committee make-up. And we have both a Democrat governor and Lt. governor.

Currently, there aren't any filed bills that we're tracking (with one notable exception!), but we're expecting a few to come down the pike as the session progresses. We can expect bills on parent-child visitation; the creation of a separate, stand-alone Children's Administration combined with the Department of Early Learning; mandatory appointments of kids' attorneys on all dependency cases; tweaks to FAR; and (hopefully!) a funding request for CASA.

While we're waiting for more bills, I thought I'd take the opportunity to explain some of the formatting, terminology and abbreviations we'll use in these updates.

"Drop" (as in "Legislator X just dropped a bill"): This means a bill has been introduced for consideration. It probably comes from when legislators literally dropped a new bill into a box.

"Pull" (as in "Please ask your legislator to pull X bill"): This usually happens when a bill is in the Rules committee – the committee that gets to decide which bills get to be voted on by the entirety of the respective house. This gets particularly nail-biting when a bill you want to see passed is getting in Rules and the cut-off date is quickly approaching. From time to time, we'll send out alerts

HB: House Bill

SB: Senate Bill

AOC: Administrative Office of the Courts. As the name suggests, it's the entity that handles statewide administrative duties for the court...things like funding distribution, preparation of fiscal notes, training requirements/guidelines/court rules, etc.

Fiscal Note: Along a bill's legislative journey, various state agencies get to weigh in on how much they think the new legislation will cost – both to the state and local (county and cities) government. If new legislation will cost less than \$50,000/year, it doesn't have to go to the respective fiscal committees (House Appropriations or Senate Ways and Means) for consideration/vote. Lots of bills die in fiscal committees.

Budget Proviso: A request for funding that doesn't have any corresponding legislation. Technically, a proviso can't have any strings attached – it's simply an allocation of funding – but every once in a while, they will add strings of how they money can and should be spent. Also, budget provisos aren't automatically included in subsequent biennial budgets – they have to be re-asked for.

Cutoff: The deadline that any new legislation has to be voted out of committee before it can proceed to the next step.

Notable Committees: Most of the bills we'll be tracking will be referred to one of two committees (technically 4, but both the Senate and the House have similar versions of the same thing): the Judiciary committees or the Human Services Committee.

Judiciary: The Judiciary committees are where we are likely to see the attorneys for kids; CASA funding requests, and issues dealing with court process. In the House, the committee is chaired by Rep. Laurie Jenkins ([click here for a full roster.](#))

Law and Justice: The Senate's judiciary committee. It's chaired by Sen. Padden. [Click here for a full roster.](#)

ELHS: The House's Early Learning and Human Services committee. Probably the most important committee for us – it's where most of the bills regarding dependency are heard/considered. Rep. Kagi is the chair; [click here for a full committee roster.](#)

HSM: This is the Senate's counterpart committee. Technically, it's the "Human Services, Mental Health & Housing" but HSMHH isn't much of an abbreviation, nor does it easily roll off the fingers. Sen. O'Ban is the chair...[click here for a full roster](#)

Generally, bills follow a trajectory that looks something like this (this is grossly simplified, and it seems every year some new twist comes along):

A bill may be introduced in either the Senate or House of Representatives by a member.

1. It is referred to a committee for a hearing. The committee studies the bill and may hold public hearings on it. It can then pass, reject, or take no action on the bill.
2. If the bill needs funding, it then goes to Fiscal committee
3. The committee report(s) on the passed bill is read in open session of the House or Senate, and the bill is then referred to the Rules Committee.
4. The Rules Committee can either place the bill on the second reading calendar for debate before the entire body, or take no action.

5. At the second reading, a bill is subject to debate and amendment before being placed on the third reading calendar for final passage.

After passing one house, the bill goes through the same procedure in the other house (ie, House bills go to the Senate; Senate bills go to the House)

6. If amendments are made in the other house, the first house must approve the changes.
7. When the bill is accepted in both houses, it is signed by the respective leaders and sent to the governor.
8. The governor signs the bill into law or may veto all or part of it. If the governor fails to act on the bill, it may become law without a signature.

For an even more comprehensive (yet somehow still not complete) overview of the legislative process, [click here](#).

Sections of our legislative update:

NEW BILLS

Any new bills dropped (see, now you know what this means!) since the last update will go here.

PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ON BILLS

Bills that are still alive and awaiting further action (committee or floor vote) go here. This also where we'll report on any changes or amendments to the bill as well as procedural updates.

DEAD BILLS

Bills that failed to pass before a cutoff deadline or were killed in committee go here. You'd think that'd be the end of it but...

(UN)DEAD BILLS

Yes, bills sometimes come back to life, either through tacking them on to a bill that is still alive (hmm... "must eat brains..." ?) or by writing a budget proviso that curiously includes very similar language of the dead bill.

And the fun doesn't stop here. Any bills introduced at the beginning of the biennium (odd number years) are automatically reintroduced the following year (even the dead ones)...and the process begins anew.