

Capitol News

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As expected, Governor Inslee announced his candidacy for president last Friday. Climate change will be the central platform of his race. It's still unknown how his run for president will affect his work as governor, in this budget-writing legislative session. When Governor Inslee is out of town, Lieutenant Governor Cyrus Habib will be Acting Governor.

Last week, the legislative focus was on the fiscal committees. Those bills with an impact on the state budget must have been voted out of either the House Appropriations Committee or the Senate Ways & Means Committee by last Friday to move on in the process. Of course, there's an exception for bills that are deemed "necessary to implement the budget" or NTIB. Bills that pass the policy and fiscal committees are then referred to the Rules Committee. Here, legislators must decide which bills will advance to a vote by all members of the House or Senate.

This week, legislators will be on the House and Senate floor, voting on bills to meet the "house of origin" deadline on March 13th (House bills out of the House; Senate bills out of the Senate). Legislators have hundreds of bills available for consideration during floor action. Time is limited, however, and many bills that make it this far in the process die on the House or Senate floor calendar, simply because of lack of time.

Here's an update on the status of WSLHA's priority bills after the fiscal committee cutoff:

- **SB 5210, telecoil/Bluetooth notification**
 - WSLHA is working with the audiology community on this bill. No update yet.
 - This bill is now in the Senate Rules Committee.
- **SB 5887, prior authorization and six visits**
 - This is the bill that was introduced, in case SB 5601 did not advance, to further clarify that patients are allowed up to six visits before a health care benefit manager can impose prior authorization.
 - SB 5887 was voted out of committee and is now in the Rules Committee.
- **SB 5485, music therapy**
 - This bill is eligible for a vote by the Senate.
 - WSLHA has asked the prime sponsor of the bill if she will sponsor an amendment to exclude treatment of communication disorders by music therapists. No update yet.