Capitol News

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# WSLHA Priority Legislation

* [HB 1043](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1043&Initiative=false&Year=2021) is the bill that establishes Washington as a member of the Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology **Compact** (ASLP-IC). **Unfortunately, it did not pass the House before the cutoff deadline.** It died with about 60 other bills on the floor calendar. Our prime sponsor, Rep. Leavitt, has already committed to bring the bill back next session.

# Other Bills of Interest

* [SB 5848](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5848&Initiative=false&Year=2021), the bill that licenses **music therapists**, passed the Senate and is now in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee. However, it is likely dead, as it has not been scheduled for a hearing.
* [SB 5753](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5753&Initiative=false&Year=2021) makes changes to **boards and commissions** at the Department of Health, including the Board of Hearing & Speech (BOHS). This bill increases the compensation for BOHS members and clarifies its definition of a quorum. This bill was heard in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee last Wednesday**.** It is scheduled for a committee vote on Wednesday.

**General News**

With the clock ticking down to the house of origin cutoff, the majority Democratic leadership must make difficult decisions about which bills will be voted on and which bills will fail, not for lack of votes, but for the simple scarcity of time. After all, the only strategy minority Republicans can employ to stop bills is to **run down the clock**, speaking on as many amendments as they can write. There are always more bills than hours to debate them, and even bills with no significant problems frequently die in a process that is designed to stop bills.

Overall, House members introduced 602 new bills this session and passed 215 off the House floor by 5pm on Tuesday. Senators introduced 546 new bills, 222 of which were approved before cutoff. And cutoff deadlines approach must faster now, with the policy committee cutoff looming next Thursday and the fiscal committee cutoff on February 28th.

When leadership advances a bill they know will take hours of floor time the day before cutoff, it must be a caucus priority. Such was the case with HB 1837, the bill that repeals restrictions on the regulation of work-related **musculoskeletal disorders** and ergonomics under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act. After the dinner break on Valentine’s Day, the House settled in to debate fifteen amendments on this bill. Nine hours later, with most Republicans speaking on each amendment, the bill passed 50-48 at 6:24am, with 7 swing Democrats voting against it. This bill is a top priority for the labor community and is strongly opposed by the Building Industry Association of Washington, the Washington Food Industry Association, the Association of Washington Business, and other business organizations.

On Tuesday afternoon, hours before the house of origin floor cutoff, the Senate debated SB 5909, the **executive emergency powers bill**. Over the course of several hours, Republicans, who found the underlying bill underwhelming, offered several amendments that would have made it easier for the Legislature to curb the governor’s emergency powers, but all were rejected. The bill passed 29-20 with Republican Senators Hawkins and Sefzik voting in favor.

Also on Wednesday, February 16, the House Labor and Workplace Standards Committee heard 5761 (Randall, D-26) which requires employers with 15 or more employees to **disclose salary information and a description of expected benefits in job postings**. Current law requires the disclosure to happen when the job is offered. The bill is opposed by the Washington Retail Association and the Association of Washington Business. Both organizations contend the law could be cumbersome and could result in disclosure of propriety info. Supporters of the bill call it an equity issue and argue many candidates spend hours going through rounds of interviews only to find out the offered pay is too low.

Lawmakers received **positive economic news** this week, as budget writers put the final touches on their budgets. The bicameral Economic and Revenue Forecast Council reported that revenue projections are up by $452 million since last November’s revenue forecast for this biennium and by $1.31 billion for the 23-25 biennium. Overall tax revenue stands at $61.7 billion. On Monday, Senate Democrats will release their proposed supplemental budget at 8 a.m. with House Democrats releasing theirs at noon. Public hearings will also take place Monday afternoon.

Governor Inslee held a much-anticipated press conference on Thursday to announce **the end of the indoor mask mandate**. While he did not lift the emergency orders, which allow the state to access federal funds, vaccine verification or proof of a negative COVID-19 test will no longer be required for attendance at large events as of March 1st. And as of March 21, masks will no longer be required in:

* Schools, childcare facilities, libraries
* Restaurants and bars
* Houses of worship
* Gyms
* Grocery stores, businesses, and retail establishments

Masks will continue to be required in:

* Healthcare facilities including hospitals, outpatient, dental facilities, and pharmacies
* Long-term care settings
* Public transit, taxis, rideshare vehicles and school buses (federal requirement)
* Correctional facilities
* Private businesses and local governments that want to require masks for their employees, customers, or residents

State Department of Health officials will release updated guidance for K-12 schools during the week of March 6 to help schools prepare for the transition.

**Important Dates:**

February 24 – Opposite House Policy Cutoff

February 28 – Opposite House Fiscal Cutoff

March 4 – Opposite House Floor Cutoff

March 10 – Sine Die