**Capitol News**

**January 8, 2023**

After two years of conducting most business via Zoom, the 2023 Legislature convenes on Monday, January 9th for the first in-person legislative session since 2020. While we will return to in-person meetings, hearings, and floor sessions, it may not feel like a full return to pre-COVID times. Additional security in the legislative office buildings, legislators limiting the number of meeting attendees, and mask-wearing in some offices demonstrate an easing into this legislative session.

One holdover from the virtual sessions is the ability to testify remotely in most committees. Remote testimony has enabled more people from every corner of our state to engage in the legislative process and it will continue this session.

After the swearing-in ceremonies on Monday, lawmakers will get to right work. Many committees will hold work sessions this week to orient their new members to the policy areas included in their committee work. The fiscal committees will hold hearings on the Governor’s operating and capital budgets this week.

On Tuesday, Governor Inslee will present his “State of the State” address to a joint session of the House and Senate. Housing, behavioral health, climate, public safety, and education are his top priorities. On Wednesday, Chief Justice Gonzalez will give the “State of the Judiciary” address to the House and Senate.

With many new faces in the Legislature, check out the Legislature’s [**website**](http://leg.wa.gov/). It contains information on legislators’ backgrounds, committee assignments and presentations from hearings. And TVW’s [**website**](http://tvw.org/) shows all committee hearings and floor sessions throughout the session.

**WSLHA Priority Bills**

One of WSLHA’s priority bills the **audiologist/speech language pathologist licensure compact** bill, has already been introduced as [**HB 1001**](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1001.pdf?q=20230108113938) and [**SB 5021**](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Bills/5021.pdf?q=20230108114028). And HB 1001 is **already scheduled for a hearing on Friday**! WSLHA will be testifying in support.

WSLHA is also backing legislation that would mandate insurance coverage for hearing instruments and the services necessary to fit them. A bill number is coming soon.