

# Washington State Legislature Olympia Basics



Source: Jim Bowen

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## Things to Know about Olympia

**The Washington State Legislature is a Citizen's Legislature.** This means that serving as a state legislator is not the primary occupation for many, if not all, of its members. Most hold full time jobs in addition to their duties in the legislature.

**The Legislature is a part-time body.** The annual legislative session, which begins on the second Monday of January convenes for either 60 or 105 days.

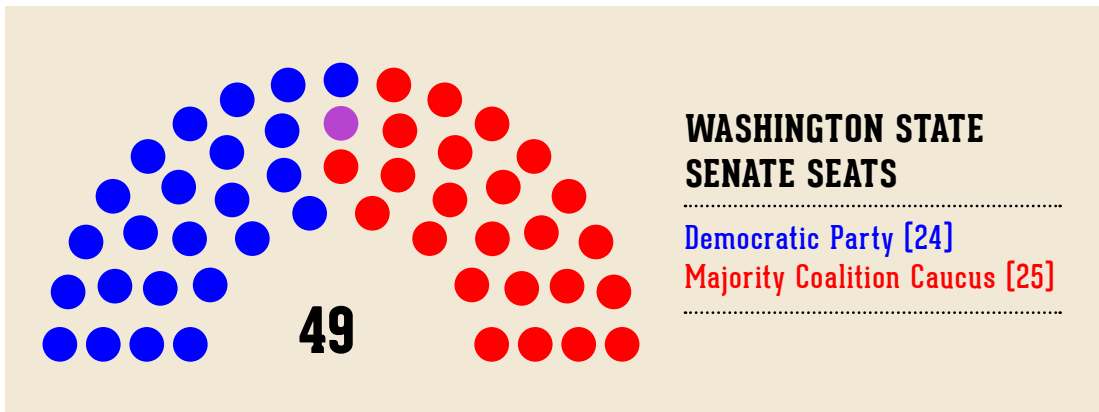
**In even numbered years, the Legislature meets for just 60 days**, but in odd numbered years, the Legislature must pass a budget, so the legislative session is extended to 105 days. As 2017 is an odd numbered year, the Washington State Legislature is currently in the midst of a 105 day session and scheduled to adjourn (sine dine) on April 23rd.

**The Legislature must pass a budget this year** – normally a difficult task, but because of the McCleary decision in which the Washington State Supreme Court held that the State Legislature was not funding education at appropriate levels, this year's budget must address the mandate from the State Supreme Court. This budget, once it passes both chambers, goes to the Governor for a signature and, barring any special session extensions, becomes effective on July 1 of each odd numbered year.

**There are two additional ways the Legislature may be called into session** – the Governor has the authority to convene a special 30 day legislative session at any time of year and the legislators themselves may call a special session by a 2/3 vote in both chambers. Most recently, the Legislature was called into [Special Session from March 11-March 29, 2016](#) in order to pass a supplemental budget and three times in [2015](#).

**The Washington State Legislature is composed of two bodies:** the Washington State House and the Washington State Senate.

**The State of Washington is divided into 49 legislative districts** with each district electing 2 representatives and 1 senator to represent it in the Legislature. Members of the Washington State House are elected to 2 year terms and members of the Washington State Senate are elected to 4 year terms.



Source: wikipedia.org

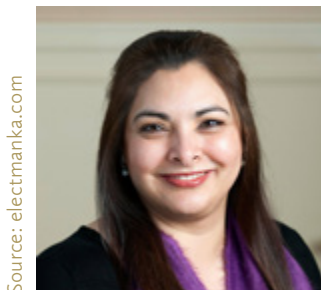
**Washington State Legislators earn \$45,474 with \$120/day per diem.** Legislators maintain offices in their home districts in addition to offices in Olympia, meeting with constituents and making public appearances in their official capacity throughout the year.

**The Washington State House is led by the Speaker of the House.** Because the Washington State House currently maintains a slim Democratic majority, the Speaker is a Democrat-Frank Chopp (D-Seattle). Speaker Chopp has served as Speaker since 1999.

**The Washington State Senate is led by the majority leader.**  
This position is equivalent to Speaker of the House.

**Though the Washington State Senate has more elected Democrats** than Republicans, the State Senate is considered under Republican control due to the fact that one member elected as a **Democrat caucuses with the Republicans (it used to be two)**, thus swinging control of the Senate to the Republicans. Sen. Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville) has served as the majority leader since December 1, 2014.

**Control of the Washington State Senate hangs in the balance** of a special election being held in the 45th Legislative District to fill the seat of Senator Andy Hill after his untimely death. This district includes Kirkland, Sammamish, Duvall and Woodinville, and while it has trended Republican in the past, the hopes for a Democratic win are high due to demographic changes as well as the fact that the Legislative District voted for Governor Jay Inslee and Democratic Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton in the November 2016 election ([more info here](#)).

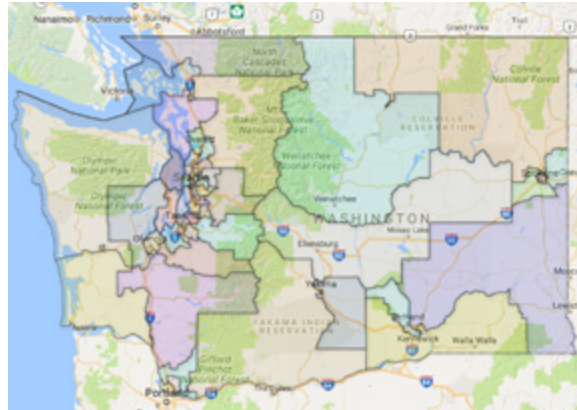


Source: electmanka.com

**While the Democrats coalesced behind candidate [Manka Dhingra](#)** several months ago, Republicans took a bit longer but candidate [Jinyoung Englund](#) has emerged as a front runner for Republicans. The election, to be held on November 7, 2017, is expected to be close and hard-fought with far reaching consequences for our state.

**Most importantly, your state legislators represent you.**  
Take advantage of their accessibility.

# Washington State Legislature Resources



Source: [app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder](http://app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder)

## Washington State Legislature 101

- ▶ [Washington State Legislature's Overview of the Legislative Process](#)  
A comprehensive overview of the Washington State Legislature and its process.
- ▶ [WSU | Impact - Washington State Legislature Class 101](#)  
Helpful FAQs explaining the Washington State Legislature
- ▶ [League of Education Voters - Washington Legislature 101](#)  
A deep dive into the Washington State Legislature including all the information you'll likely need and more. Contains multiple helpful links to help you find your legislator, etc.
- ▶ [Washington State Nurses Association - Washington State Legislature 101](#)  
Just the basics.
- ▶ [Washington State Legislature - A Citizen's Guide to Effective Legislative Participation](#)  
Information directly from the horse's mouth on how citizens can effectively participate in the legislative process.

Additionally, the Washington State Legislature offers a hotline for citizens to call with questions about the process or policy: **Legislative Information Center: tel. (360) 786-7573.**

## Current Bill Information / Legislative Tracking

- ▶ [OpenStates.org](#)  
Everything that's happening in the Washington State Legislature NOW.  
To go directly to the current status of all bills in the Legislature follow [this link](#).

## Current Bill Info [Cont'd]

- ▶ [Washington State Legislature - Current Happenings](#)  
An up to date and comprehensive calendar of all events in the Legislature. This is the first place to look to see what is currently under consideration in the Legislature and where in the process it is.
- ▶ [Washington State Legislature - Bill Information](#)  
A bit difficult to navigate, but includes tools to look up bills by number and subject, as well as to determine status of legislation and any upcoming planned action.
- ▶ [Washington State Legislature - Bills by Topic](#)  
Look up bills by topic.
- ▶ [Washington State Legislature - Bill Tracker](#)  
Allows you to create a free account and track bills of interest to you.
- ▶ [WashingtonVotes.org - State laws at your fingertips in concise plain language](#)  
Washington Votes provides up to date information on what is happening in the legislative session and includes tools for tracking legislation and votes.

## Washington Legislator Schedules, Calendars, Tips & Overviews

- ▶ [Washington Legislature - Coming to Olympia](#)  
A bit difficult to navigate, but lists links to everything you need to plan a visit to Olympia, including how to testify in a Committee for or against a bill.
- ▶ [Washington Legislature - 2017 Session Calendar](#)  
All of the key dates for the 2017 Legislative Session.
- ▶ [Washington Legislature - Agenda, Schedules and Calendars](#)  
A comprehensive page listing links to prior and upcoming Committee hearings, Committee meeting agendas, Floor activity reports, Bill introductions, Capitol Campus Activities and more.

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