

WSACE Bulletin
Week #2
January 18, 2021

The 2021 Legislative Session kicked off Monday, January 11, 2021. This is the “long” session ... 105 days as allowed under the Constitution. If they require more time than that (please, no!), the Governor can call the Legislature into special session in 30-day increments.

Long sessions are budget sessions and set the agenda, and budget, for the coming biennium. If big policy changes are to take place this is *typically* when that happens as well. This year’s focus will be all about COVID ... our public health response, budget deficits associated with the pandemic, vaccine rollout, etc. There will be opportunity for other policy debate, but much attention will be turned to the unprecedented reality we all face.

Due to the SARS-COVID 19 pandemic the entire legislative session will be virtual. There are significant pros and cons to this approach. On the positive side, virtual access means constituents will have opportunities to participate without having to travel to Olympia. It also means you can attend formal legislative hearings, and even testify, in your slippers. However, the negatives will most certainly outweigh my preference of slippers over heels. Because of the limits to virtual technology, public participation may likely be more limited. Webinar time constraints are being strictly enforced, and being behind a computer screen creates real challenges for productive communication. It inhibits your ability to read body language or provide informal follow-up with legislators and staff. A great deal of how policy makers and influencers get work done is through spontaneous conversations and hallway meet-ups. None of that will happen this year. And legislators will likely be inundated with email, text messages and phone calls, creating the potential for important feedback on legislation to be lost. We will make the best of a difficult situation, and work to ensure WSACE’s voice is loud and heard during this challenging time.

What to expect this week - week #2

In the transportation committees, week #2 will see agency introductions and public hearings on Governor Inslee’s proposed transportation budget. [Read more on his budget here.](#)

WSACE has been asked to give an introductory presentation of our association and on the “state of county roads” in back-to-back hearings in the House and Senate Transportation Committees on Tuesday, January 19. Those hearings will take place 3:30-5:30 and 4:00-6:00pm, respectively. You can tune in and watch my presentations on TVW at www.tvw.org

Also, the House Transportation Committee will hear public testimony on Governor Inslee’s proposed budget Thursday, January 21, at 3:30pm. I will be testifying, and you can view that on TVW at www.tvw.org

I will send weekly updates to you via email – so be on the lookout. I will post these weekly updates to the WSACE website as well – www.wsace.org
WSAC also provides updates on Monday mornings. You should automatically be enrolled in that email newsletter, but if not please email me and I will make sure you are included.