



West

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Washington State Visit

From March 25 to March 27, CSG West Director Edgar Ruiz and accompanying staff visited Olympia to meet with legislative leaders and newly elected members. During the visit, the CSG West staff visited the office of each member of the legislature to share information on CSG West programming for 2019 with special reminders about the [Western Legislative Academy](#) (WLA) that is offered to all newly elected members and WLA alumni.

Several members in Washington hold leadership positions in CSG West. Among them are Senator Randi Becker who serves as Vice Chair of the Westends Board, Representative Sherry Appleton who serves as Chair of the Public Safety Committee, Representative Bruce Chandler who serves as Chair of the [Legislative Council on River Governance](#) (LCRG), and Representative Jake Fey serves as CSG West's state liaison for the 2019-2020 biennium. Additionally, Senator Sam Hunt is currently serving as the CSG Vice Chair participating in organizational leadership at the national level.

As part of the visit, CSG West hosted two evening gatherings for WLA alumni with the goal of reconnecting with them, finding out about the work they are carrying out, as well as their committee activities. With a strong cadre of WLA alumni still holding public office in Washington, CSG West staff enjoyed the opportunity to visit and learn from so many alumni members.

This year's session of 105 days has been a busy one. As of April 16, two weeks before the scheduled end of this year's legislative session, over 550 bills are still being considered. Due to time constraints, it is anticipated that most of these bills will be held over to next year. The bills that seem to be advancing aim to address tenant rights, public school funding, raising the age restriction for purchasing tobacco products, restrictions on debt collections, abolishing the death penalty, and an energy bill requiring electric utilities in the state to reach 100% carbon-neutral supply by 2030 and 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045.

Like other states, Washington also has a bill related to daylight savings time. During the state visit, Washington's Senate passed legislation that would require the state to permanently observe daylight saving time year-round. The Senate bill requires voter approval of this proposal during the next general election (2020) and Congress must approve the switch to permanent daylight savings time since states can only opt in to remain on standard time permanently.



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As a result of the 2017 special Senate election, the Democratic party took control of the chamber giving the state a trifecta status. Election results also welcomed Manka Dhingra, the first Sikh elected to any state legislature in the nation. Currently she serves as the Senate's Deputy Majority Leader. Other firsts include Representative Debra Lekanoff, the first Native American woman elected to the chamber, and Representative My-Linh Thai, the first refugee to be sworn in at the legislature. Adding to the diversity of the legislature, women make up 19 of the 49 Senate seats and 40 of the 98 House seats. With a female majority in the House Democratic Caucus, the state currently ranks fourth in the nation in terms of gender parity in the state legislature.

The week prior to the state visit, updated revenue numbers for the state were released and estimated \$861 million more than expected through the middle of 2021. Last week, the legislature was nearing the end of negotiations of a record \$50 billion biennial operating budget, approximately \$5 billion more than the current two-year budget.

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