

A FREE VOTER GUIDE FROM KEYSTONE DAILY

Election Day 2026 Cheat Sheet

What's on your Washington ballot, what each choice changes, and the dates that matter

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Your Washington ballot, explained

Three statewide initiatives, ten House seats, five Supreme Court contests, and the deadlines that decide whether your vote counts.

Washington votes by mail. Every registered voter gets a ballot by Oct. 16 for the Nov. 3, 2026 general election. No request is needed. This sheet covers the three statewide initiatives, all 10 U.S. House seats, five state Supreme Court contests, and the state Legislature, plus the deadlines that decide whether your ballot counts.

There is no U.S. Senate race in Washington this year and no governor's race. The statewide measures are an income tax repeal (IP26-645), a parental rights measure for public schools (IL26-001), and a measure on girls' school sports (IL26-638). All three were placed on the ballot by petition. The state pamphlet lists no referenda or constitutional amendments this cycle. Advisory votes on tax bills, once a fixture of Washington ballots, were abolished in 2023 and will not appear.

Oct. 16
Ballots in the mail to every registered voter

Oct. 26
Last day to register online or by mail

8 p.m. Nov. 3
Drop boxes close; mailed ballots must be postmarked

3
Statewide initiatives: I-645, IL26-001, IL26-638

THE DATES

Put these on the calendar

Date	What happens
Sept. 19, 2026	Deadline for counties to mail ballots to military and overseas voters (45 days before the election under RCW 29A.40.070).
Oct. 16, 2026	Ballots mailed to all registered voters. State law requires mailing at least 18 days before the election; this is the start of the 18-day voting period. Accessible voting units are available at voting centers from this date.
Oct. 26, 2026	Deadline for online and mail voter registrations and address updates to be received (8 days before Election Day). Register or update at VoteWA.gov. Also a sensible last day to put your ballot in the mail: the Secretary of State asks voters to mail more than a week before Election Day, and to use a drop box after that.

Date	What happens
Nov. 3, 2026	Election Day. Drop boxes close at 8 p.m. sharp. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by this date. In-person registration and replacement ballots available at county elections offices and voting centers until 8 p.m.
Nov. 3, 2026	Results begin posting after 8 p.m. at results.votewa.gov. Counting continues for days; results are unofficial until certification.
Nov. 23, 2026	Last day to fix a missing or mismatched signature. Under WAC 434-261-053, a voter may cure a ballot signature no later than close of business the day before the county certifies. Mailed ballots postmarked by Nov. 3 must also arrive by the day before certification.
Nov. 24, 2026	Counties certify results (21 days after the general election, RCW 29A.60.190).
Dec. 3, 2026	Secretary of State certifies statewide results (no later than the 30th day after the election). Under the state constitution, approved initiatives take effect 30 days after the election; OFM lists Dec. 3, 2026 as the effective date for all three measures.

THE MEASURES

Three initiatives, in plain English

Each box gives the ballot question, what a yes and a no vote do, who is behind each side, and the state's own cost estimate.

IP26-645: Repeal the new income tax; ban state and local income taxes

On the ballot: Initiative Measure No. IP26-645 concerns state and local taxes. This measure would repeal a 9.9% tax on annual individual income over $1,000,000; prohibit taxes measured by individual income and taxes on individual income or the receipt of individual income; and define "income." This measure would decrease funding for public K-12 education, higher education (including universities and community colleges), and human services (primarily healthcare). (Exact text from the state voters' pamphlet.)

Yes: Repeals the 9.9% tax on individual income above $1 million that the Legislature enacted in 2026 (ESSB 6346) before it takes effect in 2028, and bars state and local governments from imposing any tax on individual income or measured by individual income. The sales tax exemptions, business tax cuts and Working Families Tax Credit expansion that came with the tax law are not repealed, according to the Attorney General's explanatory statement.

No: The tax stands. Starting with calendar year 2028, individuals pay 9.9% on income above $1 million (one $1 million deduction per household, plus up to $100,000 for charitable gifts). First payments would be due in April 2029. Five percent of collections go to childcare and early learning; 95% to the general fund.

For: Let's Go Washington, the political committee led by hedge fund manager Brian Heywood, filed the measure and reported submitting 511,408 signatures. Pamphlet argument signed by state Sen. Chris Gildon (R-Puyallup) and others.

Against: The No on I-645 campaign, joined by Gov. Bob Ferguson. Pamphlet argument signed by Washington Education Association President Janie White, Washington State Labor Council President April Sims and others. A union-backed committee, Millionaire's Tax Washington, is funded by WEA, the Washington Federation of State Employees and SEIU.

Cost estimate (OFM): OFM estimates a state revenue loss of $11.4 billion ($11,432,414,000) over state fiscal years 2027-2031, with the first lost collections in FY2029. The general fund loses $3.1 billion in FY2029, $4.28 billion in FY2030 and $3.67 billion in FY2031; the Fair Start for Kids childcare account loses $377 million. Agencies save a net $150.5 million, mostly at the Department of Revenue, which would no longer administer the tax for roughly 30,000 taxpayers.

What it means for you

- A yes vote stops a tax that has not started yet. Under current law the first payments arrive in April 2029 from roughly 30,000 filers, per OFM.
- A yes vote also writes a ban on income taxes into state law. Because voter-approved laws cannot be changed for two years without a two-thirds vote of each chamber, the Legislature could not simply reinstate the tax in 2027 or 2028.
- A no vote keeps about $3.1 billion to $4.3 billion a year flowing to the general fund starting in FY2029, money lawmakers said they intend for free school meals, childcare and local sales-tax relief. OFM notes that intent is not binding on a future Legislature.

IL26-001: Restore the 2024 parental rights law for public schools

On the ballot: Initiative Measure No. IL26-001 concerns parental rights relating to their children in public school. This measure would repeal amendments to a statute listing certain rights of parents and guardians of public-school children and re-enact the law as it was originally enacted by Initiative to the Legislature 2081. (Exact text from the state voters' pamphlet.)

Yes: Undoes the 2025 Legislature's rewrite of RCW 28A.605.005 (ESHB 1296) and restores the parents' rights list as enacted by Initiative 2081 in 2024. Schools would have to produce student records within 10 business days instead of 45, could not require parents to appear in person, and could not charge for electronic copies. Parents regain a listed right to prior notice of non-emergency medical services offered at school and a broader opt-out list. Several items the 2025 Legislature added to the statute would come out, including the nondiscrimination clause, the harassment-complaint right, and the enrollment, language-access and special-education provisions; the Attorney General notes many of those rights also exist elsewhere in law.

No: The current statute stays as amended in 2025: a 45-day window for records, health-care records governed by separate medical privacy law, opt-outs limited to the categories in federal law, and an explicit statement that the statute creates no private right of action.

For: Let's Go Washington (Brian Heywood) filed the measure and submitted 416,201 signatures. Pamphlet argument signed by La Center Superintendent Peter Rosenkranz, teacher Travis Reep and others.

Against: Gov. Bob Ferguson, Rep. Monica Stonier (D-Vancouver), the Washington State PTA, the Washington State Nurses Association, the Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the League of Women Voters of Washington. Pamphlet argument signed by state Sen. John Lovick (D) and others; campaign site NoHateInWAState.org.

Cost estimate (OFM): OFM: no fiscal impact on the state. Local school districts may incur minor, indeterminate costs to update policies.

What it means for you

- If it passes, a written records request must be answered within 10 business days, not 45, and parents get prior notice before non-emergency medical services are offered to their child at school.
- Parents would be able to opt a child out of surveys, assignments and activities on a longer list of topics, including sexual experiences, family beliefs and mental health, rather than only the categories federal law covers.
- Opponents say the measure removes the current requirement for immediate parental notice when a child is the alleged victim of abuse by a school employee; the Attorney General's statement confirms that specific provision would be removed. Supporters say schools remain mandatory reporters of abuse.

IL26-638: Bar biologically male students from girls' K-12 sports; require sex verification

On the ballot: Initiative Measure No. IL26-638 concerns participation in athletics at K-12 schools. This measure would prohibit students it defines as "biologically male" from competing in certain school athletic activities intended for female students only. It would require verification of biological sex by students' healthcare providers. (Exact text from the state voters' pamphlet.)

Yes: Students the measure defines as biologically male could not compete on teams or in events designated for female students only. This covers public K-12 schools and private schools that compete through the WIAA or a similar body. Any student who wants to join a girls-only team or event must submit a form signed by a personal health care provider verifying biological sex based on reproductive anatomy, genetic makeup or endogenous testosterone levels. The Attorney General's statement says this would generally prevent transgender girls from playing on girls' teams.

No: Current rules stay. Schools may field separate teams by sex, and OSPI regulations prohibit discrimination in sports based on sex and gender identity. No sex-verification form is required.

For: Let's Go Washington (Brian Heywood) filed the measure and submitted 445,187 signatures. Pamphlet argument signed by Olympic rowing medalist Carol Brown, pediatrician Erica Li, M.D., and others; contact group Democrats for an Informed Approach to Gender.

Against: Washington State Nurses Association President Justin Gill, Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates, the League of Women Voters of Washington and a high school girls' wrestling coach signed the pamphlet argument; campaign site NoHateInWAState.org. Wikipedia's compiled list also names Superintendent Chris Reykdal, House Speaker Laurie Jinkins, Senate Majority Leader Jamie Pedersen and the Washington Education Association.

Cost estimate (OFM): OFM: no revenue impact. OSPI would spend about $21,000 one time to update guidance. School district costs to revise policies are indeterminate.

What it means for you

- If it passes, every student seeking a spot on a girls-only team, not just transgender students, would need a provider-signed sex verification form. Supporters say routine sports physicals already cover this; opponents say it could mean new exams for girls.
- The ban reaches private schools that compete in WIAA events, not just public schools.
- A no vote leaves eligibility decisions with school boards, the WIAA and OSPI rules, which currently bar discrimination based on gender identity.

THE RACES

Who is on the ballot

Race	Candidates	Note
U.S. Senate	No race in Washington this year	Sen. Patty Murray's seat is next up in 2028 and Sen. Maria Cantwell's in 2030.

Race	Candidates	Note
U.S. House, 1st District	Suzan DelBene (D) vs. Mary Silva (R)	DelBene is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic by major forecasters.
U.S. House, 2nd District	Rick Larsen (D) vs. Edwin H. Feller (R)	Larsen is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic.
U.S. House, 3rd District	John Braun (R) vs. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D)	The state's most competitive seat. State Sen. Braun led the primary 39.7% to 36.4% per Wikipedia's compilation; Gluesenkamp Perez is the incumbent. Cook and Inside Elections rate it a Tossup.
U.S. House, 4th District	Amanda McKinney (R) vs. John Duresky (D)	Open seat. Incumbent Rep. Dan Newhouse (R) is not on the general election ballot. Rated Safe/Solid Republican.
U.S. House, 5th District	Michael Baumgartner (R) vs. Carmela Conroy (D)	Baumgartner is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Republican.
U.S. House, 6th District	Emily Randall (D) vs. Teresa Fox (R)	Randall is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic.
U.S. House, 7th District	Pramila Jayapal (D) vs. Nirav Sheth (R)	Jayapal is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic.
U.S. House, 8th District	Kim Schrier (D) vs. Spencer Meline (R)	Schrier is the incumbent, in office since 2019. Cook rated the seat Solid Democratic as of Aug. 13, 2026.
U.S. House, 9th District	Adam Smith (D) vs. Doug Basler (R)	Smith has held the seat since 1997. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic.
U.S. House, 10th District	Marilyn Strickland (D) vs. Chris D. Chung (R)	Strickland is the incumbent. Rated Safe/Solid Democratic.
State Supreme Court, Position 1 (2-year unexpired term)	Colleen Melody vs. Scott Edwards (nonpartisan)	Melody was appointed by Gov. Ferguson to the seat of retiring Justice Mary Yu. Edwards, a tax attorney, is endorsed by the state GOP.
State Supreme Court, Position 3 (6-year term)	David Stevens vs. Jaime Michelle Hawk (nonpartisan)	Open seat; Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis is retiring. Stevens, a Mason County judge, has state GOP backing; Hawk, a King County judge, is favored by progressives.
State Supreme Court, Position 4 (6-year term)	Ian Birk vs. Sean O'Donnell (nonpartisan)	Open seat after Justice Charles Johnson's mandatory age retirement. Birk is a Court of Appeals judge; O'Donnell is a King County Superior Court judge.

Race	Candidates	Note
State Supreme Court, Position 5 (2-year unexpired term)	Theo Angelis vs. Dave Larson (nonpartisan)	Angelis was appointed by Gov. Ferguson to the seat of retiring Justice Barbara Madsen. Larson, a former Federal Way municipal judge, is endorsed by the state GOP.
State Supreme Court, Position 7 (6-year term)	Debra L. Stephens vs. Todd A. Bloom (nonpartisan)	Stephens is the sitting Chief Justice, on the court since 2008. Bloom is an attorney, accountant and Navy veteran.
Court of Appeals (regional, by division)	Unopposed in the editions checked: David S. Mann and Bill A. Bowman (Div. 1, Dist. 1); Linda Coburn (Div. 1, Dist. 2); Meng Li Che (Div. 2, Dist. 1); Tracy Arlene Staab (Div. 3, Dist. 1); Megan K. Murphy (Div. 3, Dist. 3)	Court of Appeals seats appear only in the counties each division covers. Your ballot may show one of these or none.

The Legislature. All 98 state House seats and 24 of the 49 state Senate seats are on the ballot. Democrats hold a 59-39 majority in the House and 30-19 in the Senate, so Republicans would need a net gain of 11 House seats or six Senate seats to win a majority in either chamber. The Secretary of State ordered a manual recount in the 42nd District Senate primary (Whatcom County), where the second- and third-place finishers were four votes apart; the Washington State Standard flags that open seat, plus the 10th, 26th, 35th and 43rd districts, among the races to watch.

HOW TO MAKE IT COUNT

Eight things to know before you seal the envelope

- [ ] Track your ballot at VoteWA.gov from mailing to acceptance. You can sign up for text alerts that tell you when it is processed or if your signature needs attention.
- [ ] Sign the return envelope; you do not have to vote every race for the ballot to count. Counties compare that signature to your registration record. If it is missing or does not match, the county must contact you by mail and, if it has your number or email, by phone, text or email within three business days. You can fix it by returning the signature form, by appearing in person, or by providing ID details such as a partial driver's license or Social Security number. Deadline: close of business Nov. 23.
- [ ] Drop boxes are open 24 hours a day and close at 8 p.m. on Nov. 3. A ballot in a drop box by then is guaranteed on time. Find locations at VoteWA.gov.
- [ ] Mailing is free (no stamp needed) but your ballot must be postmarked by Nov. 3. The state and county auditors recommend mailing more than a week before Election Day. Inside that week, use a drop box.
- [ ] Need a replacement ballot, or moved? Contact your county elections office or visit a voting center. In person, you can register, update your address, and get a ballot through 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- [ ] Accessible Voting Units with audio, visual and tactile options are available at county elections offices and voting centers starting Oct. 16. An audio voters' pamphlet is at sos.wa.gov/elections, or call 1-800-448-4881 for a USB copy.
- [ ] Military and overseas voters can register any time on or before Election Day and may receive the ballot by mail, email or fax; counties mailed those ballots by Sept. 19. Spouses and dependents away from home have the same rights.
- [ ] Voting rights are restored automatically on release from prison. If you were registered before a felony conviction, you must register again.

KEEP GOING

Election night, explained the next morning

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Important: Nonpartisan summary compiled from the official state voters' pamphlet, the Secretary of State, the Office of Financial Management and state law as of October 8, 2026. Ballot titles are quoted or closely paraphrased from the pamphlet; read the full measure text and both sides' arguments at sos.wa.gov before voting. Dates for signature curing and certification are set by statute; confirm with your county elections office. Keystone Daily does not endorse candidates or measures in this guide.

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