

THE OLYMPIAN

# Variety of new laws take effect in Wash. Sunday

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OLYMPIA, Wash. — A variety of new laws take effect Sunday in Washington state, ranging from measures that make it easier for certain businesses to serve alcohol to a plan that compensates people who have been wrongfully convicted.

Lawmakers passed more than 300 bills this year, most of which take effect this weekend, though a handful of others will hit the books in September.

While the focus of the recent marathon legislative session was on the \$33.6 billion, two-year state operating budget that was signed into law just hours ahead of a deadline that would have triggered a government shutdown, several other issues also came to the forefront.

— **WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS:** A new law allows people who were wrongfully convicted of a crime to file a claim for damages against the state.

A successful case would have to show that a wrongful conviction was overturned based on significant evidence of innocence.

State compensation levels are to be similar to amounts paid by the federal government, according to House Bill 1341. A wrongly convicted person would receive \$50,000 for each year of imprisonment, including time spent awaiting trial. An additional \$50,000 is awarded for each year on death row. A person will receive \$25,000 for each year on parole, community custody, or as a registered sex offender.

The state will also pay all child support owed while the claimant was in custody, and reimburse all court and attorneys' fees up to \$75,000.

In addition, in-state college tuition waivers will be provided for the person who was wrongfully convicted, as well as his or her children and/or step-children.

— **ALCOHOL:** Two measures, House Bill 1001 and Senate Bill 5607, will allow theaters to sell alcohol to patrons 21 and over.

Another plan, Senate Bill 5396, allows businesses that sell hard liquor to offer small samples of different drinks. And Senate Bill 5674 allows farmers markets to provide samples of wine and beer.

Another new law, Senate Bill 5774, allows students who are at least 18 to taste — and spit out — alcohol in certain classroom settings, giving a boost to community and technical colleges with culinary or alcohol-technology degree programs.

Also, state retailers will now be required to place stringent controls over alcohol sales at self-checkout machines under House Bill 1001. The machines must freeze transactions involving alcohol sales until a worker verifies the buyer is at least 21 years old.

— **SOCIAL MEDIA PASSWORDS:** Employers will now be barred from asking for Facebook, Twitter or other social media passwords.

The new law, Senate Bill 5211, also bars employers from requiring workers to "friend" managers so that their profile is viewable. The measure, however, allows companies to request "content" of employee social media sites during internal investigations, which can be opened if an employer has received a tip that a worker may be leaking information.

The Associated Press reported last year that some employers around the country were asking applicants for their social media information.

— **WOLVES:** The cost of some specialized license plates will increase to pay for a program to compensate the owners of livestock who suffer losses due to wolf attacks. Lawmakers have said Senate Bill 5193 is one step in a broader strategy to manage concerns about wolves preying on cattle.

— **FIREARM OFFENDER REGISTRY:** The Washington State Patrol will begin maintaining a database of felony firearm offenders to help law enforcement keep track of such people. A judge may decide whether offenders must register with their county sheriff as part of the program. Unlike the state's registry for sex offenders, the information collected under House Bill 1612 will not be publicly available.

— **ELECTRIC VEHICLE PARKING:** Drivers who improperly park in spaces reserved for electric vehicles now face a \$124 penalty. Senate Bill 5849 is aimed at preventing gas-consuming cars from taking up electric vehicle spaces, but it also allows punishment for electric vehicle drivers who park in the dedicated spots but don't connect provided charging equipment.

— **TOW TRUCK FEES:** Tow truck fees are now capped under House Bill 1625, with companies being allowed to charge about \$270 to tow a vehicle and impound it for half a day and another \$60 for storage per day thereafter.

Previously, the Washington State Patrol set limits on how much contracted tow truck drivers could charge, but there were no such limits on tow truck operators contracting with private property owners.

— PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS: Washington state's Electoral College representatives will receive a larger per diem and compensation for mileage.

House Bill 1639 replaces a law enacted in the 1800s that provided compensation of only a \$5 a day and 10 cents per mile.

Under the new law, compensation would be aligned with the rules for elected officials and state employees, providing a stipend of up to \$46 a day for meals, \$77 a day for lodging and 56.5 cents per mile.

—DROPPED MARIJUANA: Lawmakers made changes to deal with a legal ambiguity related to the proper handling of marijuana inadvertently left at stores that have pharmacies.

House Bill 1808 was prompted by incidents where marijuana was found at stores after it was apparently dropped.

The measure says that if less than an ounce of pot is found at a store with a pharmacy, the store must notify law enforcement, and the marijuana must be destroyed or rendered unusable.