WASHINGTON
COURTS

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**TO:** Judicial Information System Committee Members

**FROM:** Dory L. Nicpon, Associate Director, Judicial and Legislative Relations

**RE:** Legislative Update

## 2020 Legislative Session

The 2020 legislative session is scheduled to be sixty days long, beginning on January 13, 2020. If additional time is needed in order for the legislature to conclude vital business, then special session(s) can be convened in thirty-day increments.

The legislature will likely have extensive debate about transportation and local finance as a result of additional cost associated with remediation of fish passage barriers (estimated at $3.7 billion), and reduced revenue following passage of Initiative 976. The passage of Initiative 976, which changes state vehicle taxes and fees, and modifies certain local authority to impose a vehicle fee and motor vehicle excise tax, is estimated to reduce revenue in the next six years by $1.9 billion for the state and $2.3 billion for local governments. On November 6, 2019, Governor Jay Inslee directed the Washington State Department of Transportation to postpone transportation projects not yet underway. The House Transportation Committee added the topic of "Initiative 976: Potential budgetary implications" to its work session agenda for November 21, 2019.

## Legislative Topics of Interest to the Judiciary in 2020

**Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Protective Arrangements Act (UGA):** Chapter 437, laws of 2019, changes Washington's statutes relating to guardianship to align substantially with the UGA. During the legislative interim, the prime sponsor of the new law, Senator Jamie Pedersen, convened several listening and work sessions for developing a "trailer bill" to adjust the new law.

**Mental/Behavioral Health:** Several new laws passed during the 2019 session concern mental and behavioral health issues, increasing demand for mental health services, opioid use disorder, and the *Trueblood* settlement. Representatives from trial court associations and the AOC participate on the General Advisory Committee for the *Trueblood* Settlement

Executive Committee. The on-going legislative discussion of these topics has expanded to include interest in therapeutic courts and sentencing options.

**Topics of Recurring BJA Engagement with the Legislature**

The BJA has discussed concerns and collaborated with public policy makers regarding amendments to legislation where the bill language under debate raised concerns related to the administration of justice, including: judicial independence/separation of powers; courts should not be revenue collectors; and judicial branch entities should not be funded by fees.