
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

March 26, 2020



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COVID-19 — WASHINGTON — 3/23/2020

Cases. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States occurred in Washington and was announced on January 21, 2020. As of March 22, 2020, two months from the first positive case, Washington has tested approximately 31,000 individuals (0.4% of the state population). The positive rate of testing currently stands at 6.5%, and of the 1,996 positive cases, 95 have resulted in deaths.

COVID-19 Bill. The Washington legislature adjourned sine die on March 12, 2020, ending a 60-day legislative session. The legislature passed [HB 2965](#), which provided \$175.0 million from the state's reserve account and \$25.0 million in federal funds to the Office of Financial Management to help state agencies and local governments respond to COVID-19, for total funding of \$200.0 million. Included in the bill were the following other policy changes:

- Authorizing the Department of Social and Health Services to determine nursing facility payment levels to adequately resource facilities responding to the outbreak.
- Suspending the available for work requirement for unemployment insurance benefits for individuals under quarantine until June 30, 2021.
- Appropriating \$25.0 million from the state's reserve account to a newly created COVID-19 unemployment account. The bill permits employers who have employees receiving unemployment insurance benefits as a direct or indirect result of the outbreak to apply by September 30, 2020, for assistance to cover the benefit charges for the employer.
- Authorizes the Washington State Board of Education to establish emergency waivers to grant schools flexibility from graduation requirements due to the outbreak.

Emergency Actions Taken. Governor Jay Inslee issued an [emergency proclamation](#) on March 16, 2020, that closed all restaurants, bars, and entertainment or recreational facilities and limited large gatherings through March 31, 2020. Similar to Iowa's ban, the ban does not apply to takeout, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage services. The gathering limitation is set at 50 individuals.

Additionally, the state has [taken steps](#), similar to those that have been put in place in Iowa, related to utilities nonpayment, renter evictions, business assistance, and tax collection.

Related Information. Additional information related to the situation in Washington can be found at:

- COVID-19 Response website: www.coronavirus.wa.gov
- Department of Health website: www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus

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