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A New Year Brings New Laws to Pacific Northwest Employers

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It is a new year, which means new employment laws for employers in the Pacific Northwest. The following is a brief overview of significant new laws and changes for employers with Washington and/or Oregon employees.

Washington

Increased Minimum Wage: Effective January 1, 2025, the Washington State minimum wage is \$16.66 per hour (up from \$16.28 per hour). Local minimum wage rates are also increasing January 1st:

- **Bellingham:** \$17.66 per hour.
- **Burien:** \$21.16 for large employers (500+ employees) and \$20.16 for mid-size employers (21-499 employees in King County).
- **Renton:** \$20.90 for large employers (501+ employees) and \$18.90 for mid-size employers (15-500 employees).
- **Seattle:** \$20.76 per hour for all employers, regardless of the employer's size. Small employers may no longer count tips and/or payments toward an employee's medical benefit plan toward an employee's minimum compensation requirements.
- **SeaTac** \$20.17 per hour (for hospitality and transport employees).
- **Tukwila:** \$21.10 for large employers (501+ employees) and \$20.10 for mid-size employers (15-500 employees).
- **Unincorporated King County:** \$20.29 for large employers (500+ employees), \$18.29 for midsize employers (16-499 employees) or employers with 15 or fewer employees and an annual gross revenue of \$2 million or more, and \$17.29 per hour for employers with 15 or fewer employees and an annual gross revenue of less than \$2 million.

Increased Salary Threshold for Exempt Employees: Small employers (1-50) are required to pay at least \$69,305.60 annually (\$1,332.80 weekly) for an employee to meet the salary threshold for overtime exemption under Washington law. Large employers (51+) are required to pay \$77,968.80 annually (\$1,499.40 weekly) for an employee to meet the salary threshold for overtime exemption under Washington law. The hourly wage for exempt computer professionals is now be \$58.31 per hour (3.5 times the minimum wage).

Increased Salary Threshold for Enforcement of Noncompetition Agreements: The 2025 annual salary threshold for enforcement of noncompetition agreements in Washington is \$123,394.17 (up from \$120,559.99) for employees and \$308,485.43 (up from \$301,399.98) for independent contractors.

Modifications to the Paid Sick Leave Law (SB 5793): An employee or transportation network company (TNC) driver may use paid sick leave when their child's school or place of care is closed after the



declaration of an emergency by a local or state government or agency, or by the federal government. The definition of “family member” is also modified for purposes of using paid sick leave, including anyone who lives in the worker’s home or who has a relationship with them that creates an expectation that they would take care of them during an illness.

Equal Pay and Opportunities Act Expansion (HB 1905): Effective July 1, 2025, Washington’s Equal Pay and Opportunities Act expands its applicability from “women” to “women and workers in other protected classes” (*i.e.*, a person’s age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, creed, color, national origin, citizenship or immigration status, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained guide dog or service animal by a person with a disability).

Oregon

Expanded Overtime for Agricultural Workers: Effective January 1, 2025, employers are required to pay overtime to agricultural workers after they work 48 hours per week.

Paid Leave Oregon Amendment (SB 1515): Effective January 1, 2025, employees may use Paid Leave Oregon (PLO) for time spent on the legal process for foster care placement or adoption. This leave was previously covered under the Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA), but now is covered by PLO only.

Warehouse Employee Protections (HB 4127): Employers must provide written documentation of quotas to warehouse employees upon hire or within two business days following a change to the quota to which the employee is subject, and to an employee when an employer takes an adverse action against the employee for failure to meet the quota. An employer may not take an adverse employment action against an employee for failing to meet a quota if it did not provide the required written documentation to the employee.

If you have any questions about these new laws or updating your employment policies or handbooks, please reach out to Leah Lively or Alexandra Shulman.



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