

Do you know what they do?

Qualifications and responsibilities for federal and state offices

Federal and state offices have different qualifications to run and serve, and varying responsibilities. All elected officials must be registered voters in the state of Washington, with the exception of President and Vice President. Some offices may have additional requirements.

Federal and state offices are typically up for election in even years. Some offices are regularly scheduled for election in odd years, however most up for election are the result of vacancies.

Federal offices

Only federal offices have age requirements above and beyond the age requirement to be a registered voter.

President/Vice President

The President must be at least 35 years of age and a natural born U.S. citizen. The President is indirectly elected by voters through the Electoral College to a four-year term and cannot serve more than two elected terms.

The chief duty of the President is to ensure that the laws of the U.S. are faithfully executed. This duty is largely performed through appointments of thousands of federal positions, including secretaries of cabinet-level agencies and all judges of the federal judiciary; nominees are subject to confirmation by the Senate. The President is the commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces; has the power to make treaties with foreign governments, which must be approved by the Senate; and has the power to sign and veto (reject) laws passed by Congress.

The Vice President shall become President in the event the Office of the President becomes vacant. The Vice President also serves as the presiding officer of the U.S. Senate.

U.S. Senator

U.S. Senators must be at least 30 years of age, have been a citizen of the U.S. for at least nine

years, and be a registered voter of the state from which he or she is elected. Each Senator's term is six years.

The Senate is made up of 100 members, two from each state. The Senate has several exclusive powers, including consenting to treaties, confirming federal appointments made by the President, and trying federal officials impeached by the House of Representatives.

The Senate and House have equal responsibility for declaring war, maintaining the armed forces, assessing taxes, borrowing money, minting currency, regulating commerce, and making all laws necessary for the operation of government.

U.S. Representative

U.S. Representatives must be at least 25 years of age, have been a citizen of the U.S. for at least seven years, and be a registered voter of the state from which he or she is elected. Each Representative's term is two years.

The House of Representatives is made up of 435 members, each state allocated a different number of members based on population. The total membership of the House is up for election in even-numbered years.

The Senate and House have equal responsibility for declaring war, maintaining the armed forces, assessing taxes, borrowing money, minting currency, regulating commerce, and making all laws necessary for the operation of government.

State executive offices

State executive officials must be registered voters of the state. State executive officials are elected to serve four-year terms.

Governor

The Governor is the chief executive officer of the state. The Governor makes appointments for hundreds of positions, including directors of state agencies. The Governor reports annually to the Legislature on affairs of the state and submits a budget recommendation. The Governor has the power to sign or veto (reject) legislation passed by the Legislature.

Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is elected independently of the Governor. The Lieutenant Governor is the presiding officer of the state Senate and is first in line of succession for the Office of the Governor. The Lieutenant Governor acts as Governor if the Governor is unable to perform the official duties of the office.

Secretary of State

The Secretary of State is the state's chief elections officer, chief corporation officer, and oversees the state Archives and Library. Primary functions include certifying election results, filing and verifying initiatives and referenda, publishing the state voters' pamphlet, registering and licensing corporations, limited partnerships and trademarks, registering charitable organizations, and collecting and preserving historical records of the state. The Secretary of State is second in line of succession for the Office of the Governor.

Treasurer

As the state's fiscal officer, the state Treasurer's principal duties are to manage and disperse all funds and accounts, be responsible for the safekeeping and interest on all state investments, account for and make payments of interest and principal on all state bonded indebtedness, and maintain a statewide revenue collection system for the purpose of expediting the deposit of state funds into the Treasury.

Auditor

The state Auditor works with more than 2,600 state and local governments, conducting independent financial and performance audits. The state Auditor conducts investigations of state employee whistleblower assertions about state agencies and also investigates reports of fraud, waste, and abuse of public funds received through its citizen hotline. Audit and investigation results are documented and reported to governments and the public.

Attorney General

The Attorney General serves as legal counsel to the Governor, members of the Legislature, state officials, and more than 230 state agencies, boards, commissions, colleges and universities. The office also represents administrative agencies and schools in court or administrative hearings. The Office of the Attorney General enforces consumer protection statutes and serves the public directly by providing information on consumer rights and fraudulent business practices.

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Superintendent of Public Instruction is the only state executive office elected as a nonpartisan position.

Superintendent of Public Instruction heads the state educational agency and is chief executive officer of the state Board of Education. The Superintendent is responsible for the administration of the state kindergarten through twelfth grade education program. Duties of the office include certification of teaching personnel, approval and accreditation of programs, and apportionment of state and local funds. The Superintendent also provides assistance to school districts' school improvement areas.

Commissioner of Public Lands

The Commissioner of Public Lands is the head of the Department of Natural Resources, overseeing the management of 5 million acres of forest, agricultural, range, tidal, and shore lands of the state. Subject to proprietary policies established by the Board of Natural Resources, the Commissioner is responsible for the exercise of all duties and functions of the department.

Insurance Commissioner

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner regulates insurance companies doing business in Washington, licenses agents and brokers, reviews policies and rates, examines the operations and finances of insurers, and handles inquiries and complaints from the public.

State legislative offices

To run and serve as a state Legislator, candidates must be a registered voters of the district in which they were elected.

During legislative sessions, the Legislature is called upon to enact or reject legislation affecting public policy in the state, provide for the levy and collection of taxes and other revenue, and appropriate funds to support state government and local government.

State Senator

A senator's term is four years. The Senate is made up of 49 members, one from each legislative district in the state. Approximately half the membership of the Senate is up for election each even-numbered year. The Senate's only exclusive duty is to confirm appointments made by the governor.

State Representative

A representative's term is two years. The House is made up of 98 members, two from each legislative district in the state. The total membership of the House is up for election each even-numbered year.

State judicial offices

State judicial offices in Washington are nonpartisan, meaning they do not identify a political party preference. Judicial candidates must be registered to vote in Washington and in good standing to practice law in the state. Judicial candidates are prohibited from making misleading or untruthful comments, or statements that appear to commit them on legal issues likely to come before them in court.

Supreme Court Justice

Supreme Court Justices serve six-year terms. There are nine justices on the state Supreme Court. Three justices are up for election every two years and are voted on statewide.

The Supreme Court is the highest judiciary in the state, hearing appeals and deciding on cases from the Court of Appeals and other lower courts.

Court of Appeals Judge

Courts of Appeals Judges serve six-year terms. A total of 22 judges serve in three, multi-county divisions headquartered in Seattle, Tacoma and Spokane. Each division is split into three districts.

Courts of Appeals hear and decide on most of the appeals that come up from the superior courts.

Superior Court Judge

Superior Court Judges serve four-year terms. Superior Courts are organized by county into 31 judicial districts.

Superior Courts hear felony criminal cases, civil matters, divorces, juvenile cases, and appeals from lower-level courts.