

## **Responsibilities**

The position of Lieutenant Governor is unlike any other in Washington state government, in that its duties fall within both the Executive and Legislative branches. While elected independently from the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor becomes the Acting Governor whenever the Governor leaves the state or is otherwise unable to serve. The Lieutenant Governor also functions as President of the State Senate and, as such, is the lead parliamentarian of that body and helps determine which legislation advances to the Senate floor for debate. In addition to these specific responsibilities as set out by the state's [Constitution](#), a number of additional duties for the position are assigned by [statute](#). As with any elected official, there is flexibility within the position for the incumbent to establish his or her own initiatives in matters of policy, governance or overall objectives of the office holder.

## **Acting Governor**

The number of days that the Lieutenant Governor serves as Acting Governor varies per calendar year, and is determined solely by the Governor's schedule or ability to serve. While the Acting Governor role grants the Lieutenant Governor all of the powers and responsibilities of the governorship, in practical application it entails the Lieutenant Governor signing administrative and legal directives and being available for critical decisions. The Lieutenant Governor typically would not make or propose policy changes or new initiatives while serving as Acting Governor, but does hold that authority. The role of Acting Governor is an especially important one in states of emergency. There have been several instances in which the Lieutenant Governor has stood in for the Governor to preside over emergency operations following devastating floods, forest fires, extreme snow storms, wind damage, extended power outages and other natural disasters. In such circumstances, the Lieutenant Governor may officially declare a state of emergency, receive up-to-date briefings by appropriate state officials, visit the incident command center, make statements to the media or conduct press conferences to relay public safety information, visit with emergency areas, and tour impacted areas.

## **President of the Senate**

As president of the State Senate, the Lieutenant Governor stands at the rostrum in Senate chambers whenever the Senate is in session and leads the parliamentary discussion as legislation is being debated. If there is a dispute on the floor, or if there is a question on the procedural correctness or legality of a motion, the

Lieutenant Governor, in association with senate counsel, will be called upon to make a ruling on the matter. The Lieutenant Governor also presides over joint sessions of the State Senate and House of Representatives, which notably occurs during the Governor's annual State of the State Address, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court's State of the Judiciary Address, in addition to other lower-profile joint sessions. As part of his authority as president of the Senate, the Lieutenant Governor also chairs the [Senate Committee on Rules](#), the 21-member body that determines which legislation advances to the floor of the Senate for debate. In addition to serving as Chair, the Lieutenant Governor is a voting member of the Rules Committee. In addition, the Lieutenant Governor serves as a resource for Senate membership. The Lieutenant Governor is frequently called upon to help resolve disputes between members, and is available to individual members who seek his counsel on a variety of issues.

## **Economic Development and International Relations**

The Lieutenant Governor by law chairs the [Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations \(LCEDIR\)](#). This 13-member panel is comprised of an evenly split membership of House and the Senate members, appointed by the Chair. Committee meetings are typically held two or three times a year at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor, who also determines which topics are presented. In addition to the committee work the Lieutenant Governor continually meets with leaders in government, business, industry and education on economic development issues. Throughout the year, the Lieutenant Governor represents the State of Washington to visiting foreign officials. The Lieutenant Governor also reaches out to Washington state's diverse ethnic groups by participating in significant cultural events, dedicating staff work to year-round community outreach, and by building relationships with cultural, tribal, ethnic, and religious leaders around the state. The Lieutenant Governor and his staff are active members of the [Washington State Consular Association](#), an honor organization whose members serve as ambassadors of trade and goodwill to foreign nations through a variety of initiatives, and which is composed of dignitaries who formally represent 41 foreign nations in the state of Washington. By [statute](#), the Lieutenant Governor serves as one of the statewide board directors of the organization, in addition to the Governor, and the Secretary of State.

## **Constituent Relations**

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor has an open phone line to incoming constituent calls, and receives a high volume of calls from constituents seeking

assistance with a wide variety of issues. The Lieutenant Governor's Office works to address such issues whenever possible by making inquiries on behalf of constituents, and using staff resources to resolve particularly complex problems. In situations where similar constituent issues affect a large number of Washingtonians, the Lieutenant Governor may direct Office resources toward serving that issue as a priority.

## **Committee Responsibilities**

As part of his duties, the Lieutenant Governor serves by statute on 10 committees or boards, many in association with other elected officials. These include the aforementioned Senate Committee on Rules, the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations, and the Association of Washington Generals. Additionally, the Lieutenant Governor serves on the following boards and committees:

- [State Capitol Committee](#): Sets policy direction and provides oversight for capital buildings and grounds management.
- [State Finance Committee](#): Sets state bonding investment strategies for state finances.
- [Washington Health Care Facilities Board](#): Provides tax-exempt financing for capital funding of health care facilities.
- [Washington Higher Education Facilities Board](#): Provides tax-exempt financing for capital funding of higher education facilities.
- [Capital Furnishings Preservation Committee](#): Raises funds for maintenance and restoration of historic furniture
- [Medal of Valor Committee](#): Selects honorees for the Washington state Medal of Valor award.
- [Medal of Merit Nominating Committee](#): Selects honorees for Medal of Merit Award, recognizing individuals for outstanding service to Washington state.