

2021-2023 General Government Tentative Agreement - Frequently Asked Questions -



What is a tentative agreement? An agreement is tentative until it is ratified by the membership. Once ratified, the tentative agreement (TA) becomes the contract subject to an up or down vote by the legislature.

How do I vote? Instructions can be found at <https://wfse.org/general-government-bargaining-updates>.

What if I do not know my PIN to vote online? Check your personal email. If you cannot locate your PIN, contact MCC@WFSE.org or 833-MCC-WFSE.

Where may I find more info about the tentative agreement? <https://wfse.org/general-government-bargaining-updates>.

Is it true that there is no general wage increase because of the budget crisis? Correct. WA is currently projecting a \$8.8 billion budget gap now through the next biennium due to impacts of COVID on our economy and revenue system. We are proud of our ability to find creative solutions to mitigate permanent layoffs and program cuts. We maintained the 3% increase received this past July, held the line on health care, and will continue yearly steps. **The recent updated revenue forecast cuts this in half but remains a significant gap. This improvement gives us a greater opportunity during the July 1, 2021 reopener to be able to suspend furloughs in the 2nd year.**

What about our health benefits? We are part of a labor union coalition that negotiates our health care benefits via PEBB. In conjunction with budget savings through furloughs, we are able to hold the line on the current 85/15 premium split (employer paying 85% of the monthly premium). The TA maintains the \$125 annual wellness incentive and the \$250 HSA for workers with low income. (We agreed to suspend the annual \$25 Amazon gift card.)

Will I receive my annual step increase on my anniversary? If you are currently progressing through the steps within your salary range, your step increases will continue as usual.

What if I am on Step L? The same criteria applies to be on Step L for 6 years before the longevity Step M is granted. So, depending on how long you've been at L, you may or may not move a step during this contract.

What if I am on Step M? Once you complete the process of moving through the steps, including the longevity step M, there are no more steps, as you are considered at the expert level step of your position based on your experience.

Does everyone have to do furloughs? Employees in back-fill positions are exempt from furloughs – for many, this is considered a fair exchange for the lack of access to Courageous Duty Pay during COVID.

Why are these furloughs different than the ones we are doing now with SharedWork program at ESD? Currently, the CARES Act (federal legislation re: COVID response) allows for federal dollars to allow for state budget savings. This is currently set to expire at the end of 2020. Without this federal assistance, the SharedWork program does not create budget savings – it actually creates additional cost and defeats the goals of savings. **We have agreed to meet and discuss if federal or state legislation were to pass that would impact furloughs beginning next July.**

Will I get UI to help offset income loss of furloughs? At this time, the furloughs scheduled to begin next July would be subject to regular unemployment criteria, not the SharedWork program.

Can the employer still implement layoffs or more furloughs? Yes. The contract allows for 30 furlough days. We bargained the impacts of the 24 furloughs the employer needed to implement in order to meet the October 1 financial targets to proceed to the Governor's budget and legislative approval. Any additional furloughs would still require proper notice by the employer and allow us to bargain the impacts. If the economy gets worse instead of better, we may need to negotiate additional alternatives to permanent cuts/layoffs.

How can I help save jobs and stop the cuts to vital services? Get involved in the [People First Campaign](#) and call on legislators to secure additional revenue in the next legislative session.

Is there something I can do right now about this budget crisis? Yes, visit wfse.org and get connected with your legislators. Talk with your co-workers, family, and friends to be sure folks understand the real issues we face.

How will furloughs impact my pension/retirement?

We do not bargain pension or retirement. It is a prohibited subject of bargaining under the collective bargaining law. However, legislation is expected to ensure furloughs do not reduce service/benefit. Here is a reference if you'd like to learn more. <https://www.drswa.gov/publications/member/multisystem/furloughs/>