

Washington labor law checklist 2026

Minimum wage	\$17.13 an hour.
Tipped cash wage	\$17.13 (no tip credit)
Next change	\$17.73 on January 1, 2027
Local rates	Seattle, Tukwila, SeaTac, Renton, Everett, Bellingham, Burien, and King County (unincorporated) set local minimum wages above the state rate.
Overtime	The federal FLSA rule applies: overtime at 1.5 times the regular rate after 40 hours in a workweek. There is no daily overtime rule.
Exempt salary test	Exempt employees must earn at least 2.25 times the state minimum wage for a 40-hour week: \$1,541.70 a week (\$80,168.40 a year) in 2026.
Meal breaks	A 30-minute meal period for shifts over 5 hours, given between the 2nd and 5th hour, plus another for 3 or more hours past the normal workday.
Rest breaks	A paid 10-minute rest break for every 4 hours worked, and no more than 3 hours without a rest break.
Final pay if fired	By the next regular payday.
Final pay if they quit	By the next regular payday.
Unused PTO	Not required by state law. Follow your written policy or contract, and apply it consistently.
Paid sick leave	Paid sick leave: 1 hour for every 40 hours worked, with no annual cap on accrual and carryover of up to 40 hours.
Paid family leave	Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave: up to 12 weeks (16 combined, 18 with pregnancy complications), funded by employer and employee premiums. Employers also withhold WA Cares long-term care premiums.
Pay transparency	Required for employers with 15 or more employees: pay range and benefits in every posting.
New hire reporting	Report each new hire within 20 days of the hire date, the federal deadline.
State income tax	No state income tax on wages.
State agency	Washington Department of Labor and Industries: https://www.lni.wa.gov

What trips up Washington employers

- ☐ The exempt salary threshold is above \$80,000 and rises every year.
- ☐ No tip credit: tipped employees get the full minimum wage before tips.
- ☐ Pay range lawsuits under Washington's posting law have been common. Put a range in every posting.
- ☐ Seattle and several other cities set higher local minimum wages.
- ☐ Check the minimum wage on January 1 and July 1, and update payroll and posters.
- ☐ Confirm final pay timing before every termination meeting.

All 50 states and DC, comparison tables, and a free CSV: hrtally.com/state-labor-laws

Compare HR and payroll software for multi-state employers at www.hrtally.com