AN ACT Relating to improving the administration of unclaimed property laws; amending RCW 63.29.020, 63.29.140, 63.29.170, 63.29.180, 63.29.290, 63.29.300, and 63.29.340; reenacting and amending RCW 63.29.190; adding new sections to chapter 63.29 RCW; creating a new section; and providing a contingent effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

Sec. 1. RCW 63.29.020 and 2011 c 116 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided by this chapter, all intangible property, including any income or increment derived therefrom, less any lawful charges, that is held, issued, or owing in the ordinary course of the holder's business and has remained unclaimed by the owner for more than three years after it became payable or distributable is presumed abandoned.

(2) Property, with the exception of unredeemed Washington state lottery tickets and unpresented winning parimutuel tickets, is payable and distributable for the purpose of this chapter notwithstanding the owner's failure to make demand or to present any instrument or document required to receive payment.
(3) This chapter does not apply to claims drafts issued by insurance companies representing offers to settle claims unliquidated in amount or settled by subsequent drafts or other means.

(4) This chapter does not apply to property covered by chapter 63.26 RCW.

(5) This chapter does not apply to used clothing, umbrellas, bags, luggage, or other used personal effects if such property is disposed of by the holder as follows:

(a) In the case of personal effects of negligible value, the property is destroyed; or

(b) The property is donated to a bona fide charity.

(6) This chapter does not apply to a gift certificate ((subject to the prohibition against expiration dates under RCW 19.240.020 or to a gift certificate subject to RCW 19.240.030 through 19.240.060. However, this chapter applies to)) lawfully issued under chapter 19.240 RCW, except lawfully issued gift certificates presumed abandoned under RCW 63.29.110. Nothing in this section limits the application of chapter 19.240 RCW.

(7) Except as provided in RCW 63.29.350, this chapter does not apply to excess proceeds held by counties, cities, towns, and other municipal or quasi-municipal corporations from foreclosures for delinquent property taxes, assessments, or other liens.

(8)(a) This chapter does not apply to a premium paid by an agricultural fair by check.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection the following definitions apply:

(i) "Agricultural fair" means a fair or exhibition that is intended to promote agriculture by including a balanced variety of exhibits of livestock and agricultural products, as well as related manufactured products and arts, including: Products of the farm home and educational contests, displays, and demonstrations designed to train youth and to promote the welfare of farmers and rural living; and

(ii) "Premium" means an amount paid for exhibits and educational contests, displays, and demonstrations of an educational nature. A "premium" does not include judges' fees and expenses; livestock sale revenues; or prizes or amounts paid for promotion or entertainment activities such as queen contests, parades, dances, rodeos, and races.
Sec. 2. RCW 63.29.140 and 2004 c 168 s 15 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A gift certificate or a credit memo issued in the ordinary course of an issuer's business which remains unclaimed by the owner for more than three years after becoming payable or distributable is presumed abandoned.

(2) In the case of a gift certificate, the amount presumed abandoned is the price paid by the purchaser for the gift certificate. In the case of a credit memo, the amount presumed abandoned is the amount credited to the recipient of the memo.

(3) A gift certificate that is lawfully issued under chapter 19.240 RCW and that is presumed abandoned under this section may, but need not be, included in the report as provided under RCW 63.29.170(4).

Sec. 3. RCW 63.29.170 and 2004 c 168 s 16 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A person holding property presumed abandoned and subject to custody as unclaimed property under this chapter must report to the department concerning the property as provided in this section.

(2) The report must be verified and must include:

(a) Except with respect to travelers checks and money orders, the name, if known, and last known address, if any, of each person appearing from the records of the holder to be the owner of property with a value of more than fifty dollars presumed abandoned under this chapter;

(b) In the case of unclaimed funds of more than fifty dollars held or owing under any life or endowment insurance policy or annuity contract, the full name and last known address of the insured or annuitant and of the beneficiary according to the records of the insurance company holding or owing the funds;

(c) In the case of the contents of a safe deposit box or other safekeeping repository or in the case of other tangible property, a description of the property and the place where it is held and where it may be inspected by the department, and any amounts owing to the holder;
(d) The nature and identifying number, if any, or description of the property and the amount appearing from the records to be due, but items with a value of fifty dollars or less each may be reported in the aggregate;

(e) The date the property became payable, demandable, or returnable, and the date of the last transaction with the apparent owner with respect to the property; and

(f) Other information the department prescribes by rule as necessary for the administration of this chapter.

(3) If the person holding property presumed abandoned and subject to custody as unclaimed property is a successor to other persons who previously held the property for the apparent owner or the holder has changed his or her name while holding the property, the holder shall file with the report all known names and addresses of each previous holder of the property.

(4) The report must be filed before November 1st of each year and shall include, except as provided in RCW 63.29.140(3), all property presumed abandoned and subject to custody as unclaimed property under this chapter that is in the holder's possession as of the preceding June 30th. On written request by any person required to file a report, the department may postpone the reporting date.

(5)(a) Beginning July 1, 2016, reports due under this section must be filed electronically in a form or manner provided or authorized by the department. However, the department, upon request or its own initiative, may relieve any holder or class of holders from the electronic filing requirement under this subsection for good cause as determined by the department.

(b) For purposes of this subsection, "good cause" means:

(i) A circumstance or condition exists that, in the department's judgment, prevents the holder from electronically filing the report due under this section; or

(ii) The department determines that relief from the electronic filing requirement under this subsection supports the efficient or effective administration of this chapter.

(6) After May 1st, but before August 1st, of each year in which a report is required by this section, the holder in possession of property presumed abandoned and subject to custody as unclaimed property under this chapter shall send written notice to the apparent owner at the last known address informing him or her that the holder is in possession of property subject to this chapter if:
(a) The holder has in its records an address for the apparent owner which the holder's records do not disclose to be inaccurate;

(b) The claim of the apparent owner is not barred by the statute of limitations; and

(c) The property has a value of more than seventy-five dollars.

Sec. 4. RCW 63.29.180 and 2005 c 367 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department ((shall)) must cause a notice to be published not later than November 1st, immediately following the report required by RCW 63.29.170 in the printed or online version of a newspaper of general circulation within this state, which the department determines is most likely to give notice to the apparent owner of the property.

(2) The published notice must be entitled "Notice to Owners of Unclaimed Property" and contain a summary explanation of how owners may obtain information about unclaimed property reported to the department.

(3) Not later than September 1st, immediately following the report required by RCW 63.29.170, the department ((shall)) must mail a notice to each person whose last known address is listed in the report and who appears to be entitled to property with a value of more than seventy-five dollars presumed abandoned under this chapter and any beneficiary of a life or endowment insurance policy or annuity contract for whom the department has a last known address. The department is not required to mail notice under this subsection if the address listed in the report appears to the department to be insufficient for the purpose of the delivery of mail.

(4) The mailed notice must contain:

(a) A statement that, according to a report filed with the department, property is being held to which the addressee appears entitled; and

(b) The name of the person reporting the property and the type of property described in the report.

(5) This section is not applicable to sums payable on travelers checks, money orders, and other written instruments presumed abandoned under RCW 63.29.040.

Sec. 5. RCW 63.29.190 and 2005 c 502 s 4, 2005 c 367 s 3, and 2005 c 285 s 2 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:
(1)(a) Except as otherwise provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section, a person who is required to file a report under RCW 63.29.170 ((shall)) must pay or deliver to the department all abandoned property required to be reported at the time of filing the report. Beginning July 1, 2016, holders who are required to file a report electronically under this chapter must remit payments under this section by electronic funds transfer or other form of electronic payment acceptable to the department. However, the department, upon request or its own initiative, may relieve any holder or class of holders from the electronic payment requirement under this subsection for good cause as determined by the department.

(b) For purposes of this subsection, "good cause" means:

(i) A circumstance or condition exists that, in the department's judgment, prevents the holder from remitting payments due under this section electronically; or

(ii) The department determines that relief from the electronic payment requirement under this subsection supports the efficient or effective administration of this chapter.

(2)(a) Counties, cities, towns, and other municipal and quasi-municipal corporations that hold funds representing warrants canceled pursuant to RCW 36.22.100 and 39.56.040, uncashed checks, and property tax overpayments or refunds may retain the funds until the owner notifies them and establishes ownership as provided in RCW 63.29.135. Counties, cities, towns, or other municipal or quasi-municipal corporations ((shall)) must provide to the department a report of property it is holding pursuant to this section. The report ((shall)) must identify the property and owner in the manner provided in RCW 63.29.170 and the department ((shall)) must publish the information as provided in RCW 63.29.180.

(b)(i) A public transportation authority that holds funds representing value on abandoned fare cards may retain the funds until the owner notifies the authority and establishes ownership as provided in RCW 63.29.135.

(ii) For the purposes of this subsection (2)(b), "public transportation authority" means a municipality, as defined in RCW 35.58.272, a regional transit authority authorized by chapter 81.112 RCW, a public mass transportation system authorized by chapter 47.60 RCW, or a city transportation authority authorized by chapter 35.95A RCW.
(3) (a) The contents of a safe deposit box or other safekeeping repository presumed abandoned under RCW 63.29.160 and reported under RCW 63.29.170 ((shall)) must be paid or delivered to the department within six months after the final date for filing the report required by RCW 63.29.170.

(b) If the owner establishes the right to receive the abandoned property to the satisfaction of the holder before the property has been delivered or it appears that for some other reason the presumption of abandonment is erroneous, the holder need not pay or deliver the property to the department, and the property will no longer be presumed abandoned. In that case, the holder ((shall)) must file with the department a verified written explanation of the proof of claim or of the error in the presumption of abandonment.

(4) The holder of an interest under RCW 63.29.100 ((shall)) must deliver a duplicate certificate or other evidence of ownership if the holder does not issue certificates of ownership to the department. Upon delivery of a duplicate certificate to the department, the holder and any transfer agent, registrar, or other person acting for or on behalf of a holder in executing or delivering the duplicate certificate is relieved of all liability of every kind in accordance with RCW 63.29.200 to every person, including any person acquiring the original certificate or the duplicate of the certificate issued to the department, for any losses or damages resulting to any person by the issuance and delivery to the department of the duplicate certificate.

Sec. 6. RCW 63.29.290 and 1983 c 179 s 29 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The expiration, after September 1, 1979, of any period of time specified by contract, statute, or court order, during which a claim for money or property can be made or during which an action or proceeding may be commenced or enforced to obtain payment of a claim for money or to recover property, does not prevent the money or property from being presumed abandoned or affect any duty to file a report or to pay or deliver abandoned property to the department as required by this chapter.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, no action or proceeding may be commenced by the department with respect to any duty of a holder under this chapter more than six years after the duty arose.
(3) No action or proceeding may be commenced by the department with respect to any assessment under this chapter more than three years after the later of (a) the due date for payment of the assessment including any extension granted by the department or (b) thirty days after the final decision on any petition for review under section 10 of this act.

Sec. 7. RCW 63.29.300 and 1983 c 179 s 30 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department may require any person who has not filed a report to file a verified report stating whether or not the person is holding any unclaimed property reportable or deliverable under this chapter. Nothing in this chapter requires reporting of property which is not subject to payment or delivery.

(2) The department, at reasonable times and upon reasonable notice, may examine the records of any person to determine whether the person has complied with the provisions of this chapter. The department may conduct the examination even if the person believes it is not in possession of any property reportable or deliverable under this chapter.

(3) If a person is treated under RCW 63.29.120 as the holder of the property only insofar as the interest of the business association in the property is concerned, the department, pursuant to subsection (2) of this section, may examine the records of the person if the department has given the notice required by subsection (2) of this section to both the person and the business association at least ninety days before the examination.

(4) Material obtained by any person during any examination authorized under this chapter, or whether the holder was, is being, or will be examined or subject to an examination, is confidential information and may not be disclosed to any person except as provided in RCW 63.29.380.

(5) If an examination of the records of a person results in the disclosure of property reportable and payable or deliverable under this chapter, the department must assess against the person the amount that should have been reported and paid as determined or approved by the department. An assessment must also include a demand to deliver any property that should have been reported and delivered to the department under this chapter. The assessment must include interest and penalties as provided in RCW 63.29.340. The department
may assess the cost of the examination against the holder at the rate
of one hundred forty dollars a day for each examiner, but in no case
may the charges exceed the lesser of three thousand dollars or the
value of the property found to be reportable and payable or
deliverable. No assessment ((shall)) for costs may be imposed
((where)) when the person proves that failure to report and deliver
property was inadvertent. The cost of examination made pursuant to
subsection (3) of this section may be imposed only against the
business association.

((5)) (6) If a holder fails after June 30, 1983, to maintain
the records required by RCW 63.29.310 and the records of the holder
available for the periods subject to this chapter are insufficient to
permit the preparation of a report, the department may ((require the
holder to report and pay)) assess such amounts as may reasonably be
estimated from any available records.

(7)(a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, all amounts
and property identified in any assessment issued by the department
under this section must be paid or delivered to the department within
thirty days of issuance.

(b) If a timely petition for review of an assessment is filed
with the department as provided in section 10 of this act, only the
uncontested amounts and property must be paid or delivered to the
department within thirty days of the issuance of the assessment.

Sec. 8. RCW 63.29.340 and 2011 c 96 s 45 are each amended to
read as follows:

(1) A person who fails to pay or deliver property ((within the
time prescribed by this chapter shall be)) when due is required to
pay to the department interest at the rate as computed under RCW
82.32.050(2) from the date the property should have been paid or
delivered until the property is paid or delivered((unless)). However, the department must waive or cancel interest imposed under
this subsection if:

(a) The department finds that the failure to pay or deliver the
property within the time prescribed by this chapter was the result of
circumstances beyond the person's control sufficient for waiver or
cancellation of interest under RCW 82.32.105.

(b) The failure to timely pay or deliver the property within the
time prescribed by this chapter was the direct result of written
instructions given to the person by the department; or
(c) The extension of a due date for payment or delivery under an assessment issued by the department was not at the person’s request and was for the sole convenience of the department.

(2) (A person who willfully fails to render any report, to pay or deliver property, or to perform other duties required under this chapter shall pay a civil penalty of one hundred dollars for each day the report is withheld or the duty is not performed, but not more than five thousand dollars, plus one hundred percent of the value of the property which should have been reported, paid or delivered.

(3) A person who willfully refuses after written demand by the department to pay or deliver property to the department as required under this chapter is guilty of a gross misdemeanor and upon conviction may be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars or imprisonment for up to three hundred sixty-four days, or both.) If a person fails to file any report or to pay or deliver any amounts or property when due under a report required under this chapter, there is assessed a penalty equal to ten percent of the amount unpaid and the value of any property not delivered.

(3) If an examination results in an assessment for amounts unpaid or property not delivered, there is assessed a penalty equal to ten percent of the amount unpaid and the value of any property not delivered.

(4) If a person fails to pay or deliver to the department by the due date any amounts or property due under an assessment issued by the department to the person, there is assessed an additional penalty of five percent of the amount unpaid and the value of any property not delivered.

(5) Penalties under subsections (2) through (4) of this section may be waived or canceled only if the department finds that the failure to pay or deliver within the time prescribed by this chapter was the result of circumstances beyond the person's control sufficient for waiver or cancellation of penalties under RCW 82.32.105.

(6) If a person willfully fails to file a report or to provide written notice to apparent owners as required under this chapter, the department may assess a civil penalty of one hundred dollars for each day the report is withheld or the notice is not sent, but not more than five thousand dollars.
(7) If a holder, having filed a report, failed to file the report electronically as required by RCW 63.29.170, or failed to pay electronically any amounts due under the report as required by RCW 63.29.190, the department must assess a penalty equal to five percent of the amount payable or deliverable under the report, unless the department grants the taxpayer relief from the electronic filing and payment requirements. Total penalties assessed under this subsection may not exceed five percent of the amount payable and value of property deliverable under the report.

(8) The penalties imposed in this section are cumulative.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. A new section is added to chapter 63.29 RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) If, upon receipt of an application by a holder for a refund or return of property, or upon an examination of the report or records of any holder, it is determined by the department that any amount, interest, or penalty has been paid in excess of that properly due under this chapter or that any property was delivered to the department under this chapter in error, then with the exception of amounts delivered by the department to a claimant under RCW 63.29.240, the excess amount must be refunded to the holder, or the property delivered in error returned to the holder, as the case may be.

(b)(i) Except as otherwise provided in RCW 63.29.200(2) or this section, no refund or return of property may be made for any amount or property paid or delivered, or for any interest or penalty paid, more than six years after the end of the calendar year in which the payment or delivery occurred.

(ii) The expiration of the limitations period in this subsection will not bar a refund or the return of property if a complete application for such refund or return of property was received by the department before the expiration of such limitations period.

(2) The execution of a written waiver signed by the holder and the department will extend the time for making a refund of any amounts paid, or a return of property delivered in error, during, or attributable to, the years covered by the waiver if, prior to the expiration of the waiver period, a complete application for refund or return of such amounts or property is made by the holder or the department discovers a refund is due or a return of property under this section is required.
(3) For purposes of subsections (1) and (2) of this section, an application for a refund or return of property is complete if it includes information the department deems sufficient to substantiate the holder's claim for a refund or return of property. If the department receives an incomplete application before the expiration of the limitations period in subsection (1)(b)(i) of this section or before the expiration of an applicable waiver period as authorized under subsection (2) of this section, the department must grant the holder thirty days to provide sufficient documentation to substantiate the holder's claim for a refund or return of property. The department may, at its sole discretion, grant a holder up to an additional ninety days to substantiate its claim. If the holder provides sufficient substantiation documentation to the department within the additional time granted but after the expiration of the limitations period in subsection (1)(b)(i) of this section or an applicable waiver period as authorized under subsection (2) of this section, the holder will be deemed to have provided a complete application before the expiration of such limitations or waiver period.

(4) Any such refunds must be made by means of vouchers approved by the department and by the issuance of state warrants drawn upon and payable from such funds as the legislature may provide. However, persons who are required to pay amounts due under this chapter electronically must have any refunds paid by electronic funds transfer if the department has the necessary account information to facilitate a refund by electronic funds transfer.

(5) Any judgment for which a recovery is granted by any court of competent jurisdiction, not appealed from, for amounts, penalties, or interest paid by the holder, and costs, in a suit by any holder must be paid in the same manner, as provided in subsection (4) of this section, upon the filing with the department of a certified copy of the order or judgment of the court.

(6) Interest at the rate computed under RCW 82.32.050(2) must be added to the amount of any refund allowed by the department or any court. Interest must be computed from the date the department received the excess payment, until the date the refund is issued.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 10. A new section is added to chapter 63.29 RCW to read as follows:
Any person having been issued an assessment by the department, or a denial of an application for a refund or return of property, under the provisions of this chapter is entitled to a review by the department conducted in accordance with the provisions of RCW 34.05.410 through 34.05.494, subject to judicial review under RCW 34.05.510 through 34.05.598. A petition for review under this section is timely if received in writing by the department before the due date of the assessment, including any extension of the due date granted by the department, or in the case of a refund or return application, thirty days after the department rejects the application in writing, regardless of any subsequent action by the department to reconsider its initial decision. The period for filing a petition for review under this section may be extended as provided in a rule adopted by the department under chapter 34.05 RCW or upon a written agreement signed by the holder and the department.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 11. A new section is added to chapter 63.29 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Any person who has paid or delivered property to the department under the provisions of this chapter, except one who has failed to keep and preserve records as required in this chapter, feeling aggrieved by such payment or delivery, may appeal to the superior court of Thurston county. The person filing a notice of appeal under this section is deemed the plaintiff, and the department, the defendant.

(2) An appeal under this section must be made within:

(a) The time limitation for a refund provided in section 9 of this act; or

(b) Thirty days after the department rejects in writing an application for refund or return of property, regardless of any subsequent action by the department to reconsider its initial decision, if:

(i) An application for refund or return of property has been made to the department within the time limitation provided in (a) of this subsection (2) or the limitation provided in RCW 63.29.200(2), as applicable; and

(ii) The time limitation provided under this subsection (2)(b) is later than the time limitation provided in (a) of this subsection (2).
(3)(a) In an appeal filed under this section, the plaintiff must set forth the amount or property, if any, payable or deliverable on
the report or assessment that the plaintiff is contesting, which the
holder concedes to be the correct amount payable or deliverable, and
the reason why the amount payable or deliverable should be reduced or
abated.

(b) The appeal is perfected only by serving a copy of the notice of appeal upon the department and filing the original with proof of
service with the clerk of the superior court of Thurston county, within the time specified in subsection (2) of this section.

(4)(a) The trial in the superior court on appeal must be de novo and without the necessity of any pleadings other than the notice of
appeal. At trial, the burden is on the plaintiff to (i) prove that the amount paid by that person is incorrect, either in whole or in
part, or the property in question was delivered in error to the department, and (ii) establish the correct amount payable or the
property required to be delivered to the department, if any.

(b) Both parties are entitled to subpoena the attendance of witnesses as in other civil actions and to produce evidence that is
competent, relevant, and material to determine the correct amount due, if any, that should be paid by the plaintiff.

(c) Either party may seek appellate review in the same manner as other civil actions are appealed to the appellate courts.

(5) An appeal may be maintained under this section without the need for the plaintiff to first:

(a) Protest against the payment of any amount due or reportable under this chapter or to make any demand to have such amount refunded or returned; or

(b) Petition the department for a refund, return of property, or a review of its action as authorized in section 10 of this act.

(6) No court action or proceeding of any kind may be maintained by the plaintiff to recover any amount paid, delivered, or reported to the department under this chapter, except as provided in this section or as may be available to the plaintiff under RCW 34.05.510 through 34.05.598.

(7) No appeal may be maintained under this section with respect to matters reviewed by the department under the provisions of chapter 34.05 RCW.
NEW SECTION.  Sec. 12. A new section is added to chapter 63.29 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department may enter into an agreement in writing with any holder with respect to any duties under this chapter or any property or amounts due under this chapter, including penalties and interest.

(2) Upon its execution by all parties, the agreement is final and conclusive as to the periods, property, and any other matters expressly covered by the agreement. Except upon a showing of fraud or malfeasance, or of misrepresentation of a material fact:

(a) The agreement may not be reopened as to the matters agreed upon, nor may the agreement be modified, by any officer, employee, or agent of the state, or the holder; and

(b) In any suit, action, or proceeding, such agreement, or any determination, assessment, collection, payment, abatement, or refund, or credit made in accordance with the agreement, may not be annulled, modified, set aside, or disregarded.

(3) No agreement under this section may affect a holder's obligations to an owner or an owner's rights against a holder, except as expressly provided in RCW 63.29.200.

(4) No agreement under this section may include any indemnification of any holder for amounts or property that has not been paid or delivered to the department. Nothing in this subsection (4) may be construed to affect the finality and conclusiveness of any agreement under this section to the extent provided in subsection (2) of this section.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 13. (1) Section 1 of this act applies only with respect to gift certificates issued on or after the effective date of section 1 of this act.

(2) Section 2 of this act applies only with respect to gift certificates issued on or after the effective date of section 2 of this act.

(3) Section 6 of this act applies only with respect to original assessments issued on or after the effective date of section 6 of this act.

(4) Section 8 of this act applies only with respect to reports initially due, or property initially payable or deliverable, or other duties that arise initially on or after the effective date of section 8 of this act.
Section 9 of this act applies only with respect to (a) requests for refund or the return of property, where the request is originally received by the department on or after the effective date of section 9 of this act, and (b) excess payments or property improperly delivered, where such excess payments or improper delivery are discovered by the department on or after the effective date of section 9 of this act.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 14. (1) Section 8 of this act takes effect July 1, 2016, unless the department of revenue determines that it is unable to efficiently and effectively implement any of the provisions of section 8 of this act, in which case section 8 of this act takes effect July 1, 2017.

(2) The department of revenue must provide written notice of the effective date of section 8 of this act to the chief clerk of the house of representatives, the secretary of the senate, the office of the code reviser, and others as deemed appropriate by the department, as well as post notice of the effective date on its public web site. Such notice must be provided no later than June 1, 2016.