

**Chapter 37.12 RCW**  
**INDIANS AND INDIAN LANDS—JURISDICTION**

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*Qualifications of voters: State Constitution Art. 6 s 1 (Amendment  
63).*

**RCW 37.12.010 Assumption of criminal and civil jurisdiction by state.** The state of Washington hereby obligates and binds itself to assume criminal and civil jurisdiction over Indians and Indian territory, reservations, country, and lands within this state in

accordance with the consent of the United States given by the act of August 15, 1953 (Public Law 280, 83rd Congress, 1st Session), but such assumption of jurisdiction shall not apply to Indians when on their tribal lands or allotted lands within an established Indian reservation and held in trust by the United States or subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States, unless the provisions of RCW 37.12.021 have been invoked, except for the following:

- (1) Compulsory school attendance;
- (2) Public assistance;
- (3) Domestic relations;
- (4) Mental illness;
- (5) Juvenile delinquency;
- (6) Adoption proceedings;
- (7) Dependent children; and
- (8) Operation of motor vehicles upon the public streets, alleys, roads and highways: PROVIDED FURTHER, That Indian tribes that petitioned for, were granted and became subject to state jurisdiction pursuant to this chapter on or before March 13, 1963 shall remain subject to state civil and criminal jurisdiction as if \*chapter 36, Laws of 1963 had not been enacted. [1963 c 36 s 1; 1957 c 240 s 1.]

**\*Reviser's note:** Chapter 36, Laws of 1963, which became effective on March 13, 1963, amended RCW 37.12.010, 37.12.030, 37.12.040, and 37.12.060, repealed RCW 37.12.020, and enacted a new section codified herein as RCW 37.12.021.

**RCW 37.12.021 Assumption of criminal and civil jurisdiction by state—Resolution of request—Proclamation by governor, 1963 act.**  
Whenever the governor of this state shall receive from the majority of any tribe or the tribal council or other governing body, duly recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, of any Indian tribe, community, band, or group in this state a resolution expressing its desire that its people and lands be subject to the criminal or civil jurisdiction of the state of Washington to the full extent authorized by federal law, he or she shall issue within sixty days a proclamation to the effect that such jurisdiction shall apply to all Indians and all Indian territory, reservations, country, and lands of the Indian body involved to the same extent that this state exercises civil and criminal jurisdiction or both elsewhere within the state: PROVIDED, That jurisdiction assumed pursuant to this section shall nevertheless be subject to the limitations set forth in RCW 37.12.060. [2011 c 336 s 765; 1963 c 36 s 5.]

**RCW 37.12.030 Effective date for assumption of jurisdiction—Criminal causes.** Upon March 13, 1963 the state of Washington shall assume jurisdiction over offenses as set forth in RCW 37.12.010 committed by or against Indians in the lands prescribed in RCW 37.12.010 to the same extent that this state has jurisdiction over offenses committed elsewhere within this state, and such criminal laws of this state shall have the same force and effect within such lands as they have elsewhere within this state. [1963 c 36 s 2; 1957 c 240 s 3.]

**RCW 37.12.040 Effective date for assumption of jurisdiction—Civil causes.** Upon March 13, 1963 the state of Washington shall assume jurisdiction over civil causes of action as set forth in RCW 37.12.010 between Indians or to which Indians are parties which arise in the lands prescribed in RCW 37.12.010 to the same extent that this state has jurisdiction over other civil causes of action and, except as otherwise provided in this chapter, those civil laws of this state that are of general application to private persons or private property shall have the same force and effect within such lands as they have elsewhere within this state. [1963 c 36 s 3; 1957 c 240 s 4.]

**RCW 37.12.050 State's jurisdiction limited by federal law.** The jurisdiction assumed pursuant to this chapter shall be subject to the limitations and provisions of the federal act of August 15, 1953 (Public Law 280, 83rd Congress, 1st Session). [1957 c 240 s 5.]

**RCW 37.12.060 Chapter limited in application.** Nothing in this chapter shall authorize the alienation, encumbrance, or taxation of any real or personal property, including water rights and tidelands, belonging to any Indian or any Indian tribe, band, or community that is held in trust by the United States or is subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States; or shall authorize regulation of the use of such property in a manner inconsistent with any federal treaty, agreement, or statute or with any regulation made pursuant thereto; or shall confer jurisdiction upon the state to adjudicate, in probate proceedings or otherwise, the ownership or right to possession of such property or any interest therein; or shall deprive any Indian or any Indian tribe, band, or community of any right, privilege, or immunity afforded under federal treaty, agreement, statute, or executive order with respect to Indian land grants, hunting, trapping, or fishing or the control, licensing, or regulation thereof. [1963 c 36 s 4; 1957 c 240 s 6.]

**RCW 37.12.070 Tribal ordinances, customs, not inconsistent with law applicable in civil causes.** Any tribal ordinance or custom heretofore or hereafter adopted by an Indian tribe, band, or community in the exercise of any authority which it may possess shall, if not inconsistent with any applicable civil law of the state, be given full force and effect in the determination of civil causes of action pursuant to this section. [1957 c 240 s 7.]

**RCW 37.12.100 Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, and Colville Indian reservations—Retrocession of criminal jurisdiction—Intent.** It is the intent of the legislature to authorize a procedure for the retrocession, to the Quileute Tribe, Chehalis Tribe, Swinomish Tribe, Skokomish Tribe, Muckleshoot Tribe, Tulalip Tribes, and the Colville Confederated Tribes of Washington and the United States, of criminal jurisdiction over Indians for acts occurring on tribal lands or allotted lands within the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, or Colville Indian reservation and held in trust by the United States or subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States.

RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 in no way expand the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, or Colville tribe's criminal or civil jurisdiction, if any, over non-Indians or fee title property. RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 shall have no effect whatsoever on water rights, hunting and fishing rights, the established pattern of civil jurisdiction existing on the lands of the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, or Colville Indian reservation, the established pattern of regulatory jurisdiction existing on the lands of the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, or Colville Indian reservation, taxation, or any other matter not specifically included within the terms of RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140. [1995 c 202 s 1; 1995 c 177 s 1; 1994 c 12 s 1; 1988 c 108 s 1; 1986 c 267 s 2.]

**Reviser's note:** This section was amended by 1995 c 177 s 1 and by 1995 c 202 s 1, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section pursuant to RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

**Severability—1986 c 267:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1986 c 267 s 8.]

**RCW 37.12.110 Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, and Colville Indian reservations—Retrocession of criminal jurisdiction—Definitions.** Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following definitions apply throughout RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140:

(1) "Colville reservation" or "Colville Indian reservation," "Quileute reservation" or "Quileute Indian reservation," "Chehalis reservation" or "Chehalis Indian reservation," "Swinomish reservation" or "Swinomish Indian reservation," "Skokomish reservation" or "Skokomish Indian reservation," "Muckleshoot reservation" or "Muckleshoot Indian reservation," or "Tulalip reservation" or "Tulalip Indian reservation" means all tribal lands or allotted lands lying within the reservation of the named tribe and held in trust by the United States or subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States, but does not include those lands which lie north of the present Colville Indian reservation which were included in original reservation boundaries created in 1872 and which are referred to as the "diminished reservation."

(2) "Indian tribe," "tribe," "Colville tribes," or "Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, or Tulalip tribe" means the confederated tribes of the Colville reservation or the tribe of the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, or Tulalip reservation.

(3) "Tribal court" means the trial and appellate courts of the Colville tribes or the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, or Tulalip tribe. [1995 c 202 s 2; 1995 c 177 s 2; 1994 c 12 s 2; 1988 c 108 s 2; 1986 c 267 s 3.]

**Reviser's note:** This section was amended by 1995 c 177 s 2 and by 1995 c 202 s 2, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section pursuant to RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

**Severability—1986 c 267:** See note following RCW 37.12.100.

**RCW 37.12.120 Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, and Colville Indian reservations—Retrocession of criminal jurisdiction—Proclamation by governor.** Whenever the governor receives from the confederated tribes of the Colville reservation or the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, or Tulalip tribe a resolution expressing their desire for the retrocession by the state of all or any measure of the criminal jurisdiction acquired by the state pursuant to RCW 37.12.021 over lands of that tribe's reservation, the governor may, within ninety days, issue a proclamation retroceding to the United States the criminal jurisdiction previously acquired by the state over such reservation. However, the state of Washington shall retain jurisdiction as provided in RCW 37.12.010. The proclamation of retrocession shall not become effective until it is accepted by an officer of the United States government in accordance with 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1323 (82 Stat. 78, 79) and in accordance with procedures established by the United States for acceptance of such retrocession of jurisdiction. The Colville tribes and the Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, Skokomish, Muckleshoot, and Tulalip tribes shall not exercise criminal or civil jurisdiction over non-Indians. [1995 c 202 s 3; 1995 c 177 s 3; 1994 c 12 s 3; 1988 c 108 s 3; 1986 c 267 s 4.]

**Reviser's note:** This section was amended by 1995 c 177 s 3 and by 1995 c 202 s 3, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section pursuant to RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

**Severability—1986 c 267:** See note following RCW 37.12.100.

**RCW 37.12.130 Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, and Colville Indian reservations—Retrocession of criminal jurisdiction—Savings.** An action or proceeding which has been filed with any court or agency of the state or local government preceding the effective date of retrocession of jurisdiction under RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 shall not abate by reason of the retrocession or determination of jurisdiction. [1986 c 267 s 6.]

**Severability—1986 c 267:** See note following RCW 37.12.100.

**RCW 37.12.140 Quileute, Chehalis, Swinomish, and Colville Indian reservations—Retrocession of criminal jurisdiction—Short title.** RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 may be known and cited as the Indian reservation criminal jurisdiction retrocession act. [1988 c 108 s 4; 1986 c 267 s 1.]

**Severability—1986 c 267:** See note following RCW 37.12.100.

**RCW 37.12.150 Retrocession of federal jurisdiction over lands excluded from Olympic National Park.** The state of Washington hereby accepts retrocession from the United States of the jurisdiction which

the United States acquired over those lands excluded from the boundaries of the Olympic National Park by 16 U.S.C. Sec. 251e. The lands restored to the Quileute Indian Reservation by Public Law 94-578 shall be subject to the same Washington state and tribal jurisdiction as all other lands within the Quileute Reservation. [1988 c 108 s 5.]

**RCW 37.12.160 Retrocession of civil and/or criminal jurisdiction**

—**Process.** (1) The process by which the state may retrocede to the United States all or part of the civil and/or criminal jurisdiction previously acquired by the state over a federally recognized Indian tribe, and the Indian country of such tribe, must be accomplished in accordance with the requirements of this section.

(2) To initiate civil and/or criminal retrocession the duly authorized governing body of a tribe must submit a retrocession resolution to the governor accompanied by information about the tribe's plan regarding the tribe's exercise of jurisdiction following the proposed retrocession. The resolution must express the desire of the tribe for the retrocession by the state of all or any measures or provisions of the civil and/or criminal jurisdiction acquired by the state under this chapter over the Indian country and the members of such Indian tribe. Before a tribe submits a retrocession resolution to the governor, the tribe and affected municipalities are encouraged to collaborate in the adoption of interlocal agreements, or other collaborative arrangements, with the goal of ensuring that the best interests of the tribe and the surrounding communities are served by the retrocession process.

(3) Upon receiving a resolution under this section, the governor must within ninety days convene a government-to-government meeting with either the governing body of the tribe or duly authorized tribal representatives for the purpose of considering the tribe's retrocession resolution. The governor's office must consult with elected officials from the counties, cities, and towns proximately located to the area of the proposed retrocession.

(4) Within one year of the receipt of an Indian tribe's retrocession resolution the governor must issue a proclamation, if approving the request either in whole or in part. This one-year deadline may be extended by the mutual consent of the tribe and the governor, as needed. In addition, either the tribe or the governor may extend the deadline once for a period of up to six months. Within ten days of issuance of a proclamation approving the retrocession resolution, the governor must formally submit the proclamation to the federal government in accordance with the procedural requirements for federal approval of the proposed retrocession. In the event the governor denies all or part of the resolution, the reasons for such denial must be provided to the tribe in writing.

(5) Within one hundred twenty days of the governor's receipt of a tribe's resolution requesting civil and/or criminal retrocession, but prior to the governor's issuance of the proclamation approving or denying the tribe's resolution, the appropriate standing committees of the state house and senate may conduct public hearings on the tribe's request for state retrocession. The majority leader of the senate must designate the senate standing committee and the speaker of the house of representatives must designate the house standing committee. Following such public hearings, the designated legislative committees may submit advisory recommendations and/or comments to the governor

regarding the proposed retrocession, but in no event are such legislative recommendations binding on the governor or otherwise of legal effect.

(6) The proclamation for retrocession does not become effective until it is approved by a duly designated officer of the United States government and in accordance with the procedures established by the United States for the approval of a proposed state retrocession.

(7) The provisions of RCW 37.12.010 are not applicable to a civil and/or criminal retrocession that is accomplished in accordance with the requirements of this section.

(8) For any proclamation issued by the governor under this section that addresses the operation of motor vehicles upon the public streets, alleys, roads, and highways, the governor must consider the following:

(a) Whether the affected tribe has in place interlocal agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, including applicable state transportation agencies, that address uniformity of motor vehicle operations over Indian country;

(b) Whether there is a tribal traffic policing agency that will ensure the safe operation of motor vehicles in Indian country;

(c) Whether the affected tribe has traffic codes and courts in place; and

(d) Whether there are appropriate traffic control devices in place sufficient to maintain the safety of the public roadways.

(9) The following definitions apply for the purposes of this section:

(a) "Civil retrocession" means the state's act of returning to the federal government the civil jurisdiction acquired over Indians and Indian country under federal Public Law 280, Act of August 15, 1953, 67 Stat. 588 (codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1162, 25 U.S.C. Secs. 1321-1326, and 28 U.S.C. Sec. 1360);

(b) "Criminal retrocession" means the state's act of returning to the federal government the criminal jurisdiction acquired over Indians and Indian country under federal Public Law 280, Act of August 15, 1953, 67 Stat. 588 (codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1162, 25 U.S.C. Secs. 1321-1326, and 28 U.S.C. Sec. 1360);

(c) "Indian tribe" means any federally recognized Indian tribe, nation, community, band, or group;

(d) "Indian country" means:

(i) All land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way running through the reservation;

(ii) All dependent Indian communities with the borders of the United States whether in the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state; and

(iii) All Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same.

[2012 c 48 s 1.]

**RCW 37.12.170 Limits on retrocession under RCW 37.12.160.** A civil or criminal retrocession accomplished pursuant to the procedure set forth in RCW 37.12.160 does not:

(1) Affect the state's civil jurisdiction over the civil commitment of sexually violent predators pursuant to chapter 71.09 RCW

and the state must retain such jurisdiction notwithstanding the completion of the retrocession process authorized under RCW 37.12.160; and

(2) Abate any action or proceeding which has been filed with any court or agency of the state or local government preceding the effective date of the completion of a retrocession authorized under RCW 37.12.160. [2012 c 48 s 2.]

**RCW 37.12.180 Issues related to retrocession under RCW**

**37.12.160.** (1) The provisions of RCW 37.12.160 do not affect the validity of any retrocession procedure commenced under RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 prior to June 7, 2012.

(2) Any Indian tribe that has commenced but not completed the retrocession procedure authorized in RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 may request retrocession under RCW 37.12.160 in lieu of completing that procedure.

(3) Any Indian tribe that has completed the retrocession procedure authorized in RCW 37.12.100 through 37.12.140 may use the process authorized under RCW 37.12.160 to request retrocession of any civil or criminal jurisdiction retained by the state under RCW 37.12.120 or 37.12.010.

(4) The provisions of RCW 37.12.120 are not applicable to a civil and/or criminal retrocession that is accomplished in accordance with the requirements of RCW 37.12.160. [2012 c 48 s 3.]