
SENATE BILL 6034

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senators Kauffman, Conway, Hasegawa, Lias, Nobles, Riccelli, Stanford, Trudeau, and Valdez

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1 AN ACT Relating to the statutory establishment of the governor's
2 office of Indian affairs; and adding new sections to chapter 43.376
3 RCW.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) There is hereby created as a cabinet
6 agency of the governor, the office of Indian affairs.

7 (2) The office of Indian affairs shall have the following
8 responsibilities:

9 (a) Assist the governor in the development and review of
10 effective policies and legislation to support the state of Washington
11 in fostering strong and meaningful relationships with Indian tribes,
12 tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations;

13 (b) In accordance with RCW 43.376.020, provide a training focused
14 on fostering effective communication and collaboration between the
15 state and tribes, which the heads of each executive and small cabinet
16 agency, and each of the governor's policy advisors and executive
17 leadership team members, shall attend;

18 (c)(i) In partnership with relevant agencies including the
19 department of enterprise services, the office of financial management
20 state human resources, and agency tribal liaisons, expand upon RCW
21 43.376.020 to produce additional training for state employees.

1 (ii) The office of Indian affairs shall consult with tribal
2 nations in the development of the training.

3 (iii) The training shall be made available to state employees in
4 an accessible manner, including but not limited to an electronic,
5 digital format to facilitate access for state employees.

6 (iv) Cabinet agencies shall work with the office of Indian
7 affairs to determine appropriate staff and timing to receive the
8 training;

9 (d) Advise state agencies and departments concerning issues
10 relative to the Indian tribes and Indian organizations of Washington
11 state;

12 (e) Be the governor's liaison between the state of Washington,
13 Indian tribal governments, and Indian organizations;

14 (f) Be liaison and advisor to the governor and state agencies on
15 federal and state legislation and policies in Indian affairs;

16 (g) In collaboration with state agency tribal liaisons, provide
17 assistance and advice to state agencies, departments, boards, and
18 commissions concerning tribal relationships and issues impacting
19 tribal rights, communities, lands, and interests, and other American
20 Indian or Alaskan Native residents and communities of Washington
21 state;

22 (h) Regularly convene meetings with tribal nations and relevant
23 state parties to discuss issues of mutual interest in a timely
24 manner; and

25 (i) Facilitate and convene meetings with tribal leaders annually
26 to implement the Centennial Accords, including the development of the
27 agenda, identifying joint strategies, and achieving specific goals.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The executive head of the office of
29 Indian affairs shall be the executive director, who shall be
30 appointed by the governor and serve at the pleasure of the governor
31 as part of the governor's executive cabinet. He or she shall be paid
32 a salary to be fixed by the governor in accordance with the
33 provisions of RCW 43.03.040.

34 (2) The executive director shall employ a staff, who shall be
35 state employees pursuant to Title 41 RCW. The executive director
36 shall prescribe the duties of the staff as may be necessary to
37 implement the purposes of this chapter and may delegate such of his
38 or her powers, duties, and functions to other officers and employees

1 of the office as he or she may deem necessary to the fulfillment of
2 the purposes of this chapter.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The legislature hereby finds and
4 declares that nothing in this chapter, including, without limitation,
5 the creation of the office of Indian affairs, is intended to infringe
6 upon the sovereignty of Indian tribes who are recognized by the
7 United States as possessing powers of self-government.

8 (2) Indians subject to the jurisdiction of the state of
9 Washington pursuant to the provisions of Title 9A RCW and chapter
10 37.12 RCW are entitled to all services of the state of Washington
11 including, without limitation, correctional legal aid, public
12 defender, probational and psychiatric services afforded to any other
13 persons who are defendants in criminal actions or parties to civil
14 actions in the courts of this state.

15 (3) The provisions of Title 9A RCW and chapter 37.12 RCW do not
16 preclude Indian tribes who are recognized by the United States as
17 possessing powers of self-government from enacting their own laws,
18 regulations, and ordinances, and enforcing them by their own tribal
19 courts in accordance with their rules of procedure.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The office of Indian affairs may establish
21 procedures and requirements for operations and expenditures to
22 support and enhance state government partnership and relationships
23 with tribal nations. Such operations and expenditures are intended to
24 strengthen state-tribal relations and provide resources for
25 government-to-government engagement. The office of Indian affairs may
26 accept or request grants or gifts from citizens and other private
27 sources to be used to defray the costs of appropriate hosting of
28 state-tribal relations gatherings, including appropriate gift giving
29 and reciprocal gift receiving, or other activities of the office. The
30 office shall open and maintain a bank account into which it shall
31 deposit all money received under this section. Such money and the
32 interest accruing thereon shall not constitute public funds, shall be
33 kept segregated and apart from funds of the state, and shall not be
34 subject to appropriation or allotment by the state or subject to
35 chapter 43.88 RCW.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) On or before November 1st of each
37 year, the office of Indian affairs shall prepare and submit to the

1 governor and the legislature an annual written report of the
2 operations, activities, programs, and services of the office for the
3 preceding fiscal year.

4 (2) For each operation, activity, program, or service provided by
5 the office of Indian affairs, the annual report shall include:

6 (a) A description of the operation, activity, program, or
7 service;

8 (b) Budget data, including the amount and source of funding,
9 expenses, and allocation of full-time employees for the operation,
10 activity, program, or service;

11 (c) Goals, challenges, and achievements related to the operation,
12 activity, program, or service;

13 (d) Relevant federal and state statutory references and
14 requirements; and

15 (e) Other information determined by the office of Indian affairs
16 that:

17 (i) May be needed, useful, or of historical significance; or

18 (ii) Promotes accountability and transparency for each operation,
19 activity, program, or service with the public and elected officials.

20 (3) The annual report shall be designed to provide clear,
21 accurate, and accessible information to the public, the governor, and
22 the legislature.

23 (4) The office of Indian affairs shall:

24 (a) Submit the annual report in accordance with RCW 43.01.036;
25 and

26 (b) Make the annual report, and previous annual reports,
27 accessible to the public by placing a link to the reports on the
28 office's website.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act are each
30 added to chapter 43.376 RCW.

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