

Washington History

Washington is a state in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Named for George Washington, the first U.S. president, the state was made out of the western part of the Washington Territory, which was ceded by the British Empire in 1846, in accordance with the Oregon Treaty in the settlement of the Oregon boundary dispute. The state, which is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean, Oregon to the south, Idaho to the east, and the Canadian province of British Columbia to the north, was admitted to the Union as the 42nd state in 1889. Olympia is the state capital; the state's largest city is Seattle. Washington is often referred to as Washington State to distinguish it from the nation's capital, Washington, D.C..



Washington is the 18th largest state, with an area of 71,362 square miles, and the 13th most populous state, with more than 7.6 million people. Approximately 60 percent of Washington's residents live in the Seattle metropolitan area, the center of transportation, business, and industry along Puget Sound, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean consisting of numerous islands, deep fjords, and bays carved out by glaciers. The remainder of the state consists of deep temperate rainforests in the west; mountain ranges in the west, central, northeast, and far southeast; and a semi-arid basin region in the east, central, and south, given over to intensive agriculture. Mount Rainier, an active stratovolcano, is the state's highest elevation, at almost 14,411 feet, and is the most topographically prominent mountain in the contiguous U.S.

Washington is a leading lumber producer; its rugged surface is rich in stands of Douglas fir, hemlock, ponderosa pine, white pine, spruce, larch, and cedar. Washington is the nation's largest producer of apples, hops, pears, red raspberries, spearmint oil, and sweet cherries, and ranks high in the production of apricots, asparagus, dry edible peas, grapes, lentils, peppermint oil, and potatoes. Livestock and livestock products make important contributions to total farm revenue, and the commercial fishing of salmon, halibut, and bottomfish makes a

significant contribution to the state's economy. Washington ranks second only to California in wine production.

Manufacturing industries in Washington include aircraft and missiles,



shipbuilding, and other transportation equipment, lumber, food processing, metals and metal products, chemicals, and machinery. Washington has more than a thousand dams, including the Grand Coulee Dam, built for a variety of purposes including irrigation, power, flood control, and water storage.

Washington is one of the wealthiest and most socially progressive states in the country. The state consistently ranks among the best for life expectancy and low unemployment. Along with Colorado, Washington was one of the first to legalize medicinal and recreational cannabis, was among the first thirty-six states to legalize same-sex marriage, doing so in 2012, and was one of only four U.S. states to have been providing legal abortions on request before the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* loosened abortion laws nationwide. Similarly, Washington voters approved a 2008 referendum on legalization of physician-assisted suicide, and is currently one of only five states, along with Oregon, California, Colorado and Vermont, as well as the District of Columbia to have legalized the practice. The state is also one of eight in the country to have criminalized the sale, possession and transfer of bump stocks, with California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Maryland, and Massachusetts also having banned these devices.

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