

Good afternoon. You are listening to 91.9 FM KPTZ in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Simon Jaynes, bringing you your local news for February 10, 2022.

According to county elections officials, both of the Port Townsend School District Levies that were put to the voters in a special election on February 8 have passed. Right around 5,500 ballots were counted in the initial tally for propositions 1 and 2. And in each case, 75% of the votes were in favor. Proposition 1 is an educational programs and school support levy which will fund many extracurricular activities, health services, food programs and more. While Proposition 2, the capital projects levy, provides funds for long-term development projects and technology upgrades.

Ballots were cast for two other school levies in Jefferson County on February 8. The Brinnon School district has passed their 2-year replacement levy which will continue to fund operations and educational programs. Meanwhile in Quilcene, the vote count is still too close to call at the time of this broadcast. The \$12.3 million bond measure to pay for a new elementary school building needs a supermajority of 60% to pass. It received 59.91 percent in favor during the first vote tally on Election Night, so we will be keeping a close watch on this razor-thin margin and adding updates as more votes are counted. According to the *Peninsula Daily News* there are an additional 442 ballots remaining to be processed in the all mail-in election.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 20 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count since the beginning of the pandemic up to 2,797. There are currently 147 active cases in isolation and 4 Jefferson County residents are hospitalized. 75% of the county's population is fully vaccinated at this point and our case rate is 1,069 per 100,000.

According to our local health officer we are seeing case rates plateau on the peninsula, and gradually decrease statewide in the general population. There are, however, societal micro-climates in which the virus is still spreading rapidly, and prisons and correctional facilities are certainly one of these. The Washington State Department of Corrections publishes their COVID-19 case rates every week and even a quick glance at the numbers shows what a dangerous environment these facilities can be from a simple public health perspective, both for inmates and for the staff. At the statewide level, there is a daily average population on 12,546 inmates. Currently there are 2,244 active cases among this population and an additional 501 active staff cases. The total case count to date among incarcerated individuals is 12,586, and 3,859 among staff. On the Olympic Peninsula right now there are two prisons with facility-wide outbreaks – Clallam Bay Corrections in Clallam Bay and Olympic Corrections Center in Forks. Both of these facilities are maxed out in their ability to relocate individuals into medical isolation onsite and are looking into less-than-ideal alternatives such as transfers to other facilities.

On Wednesday February 9, US Representatives and one US Senator from Washington wrote a letter to the U.S. Small Business Administration to help ensure that small businesses from Tribal communities can equitably benefit from the agency's resources in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter was written by this region's local Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-06) as well as Rep. Suzan DelBene (WA-01), and Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA). The purpose of the letter is to draw attention to a unique challenge facing certain small business owners who are also members of a federally recognized Tribe and thus cannot access traditional SBA lending products. According to the lawmakers, "Tribal small businesses in our home state could not access critical relief funds provided by the SBA during the coronavirus pandemic, including the Paycheck Protection

Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, and the EIDL Targeted Advances. The inability for these small Tribal businesses, including thousands of Lummi Nation and the Quinault Indian Nation Treaty fishers, to access SBA programs harmed Tribes and Tribal members during a time of economic need.”

The letter outlines several specific actions they are urging congress to take to address this inequality, including launching a Tribal Lending Initiative to provide immediate assistance to small business owners and their workers; requiring participating lenders to accept Tribally registered business licenses for otherwise eligible loan applicants; as well as providing a report to congress on what steps are being taken to expand access and outreach to Treaty Tribal members utilizing these resources. The letter concludes by saying that “as Members of Congress representing federally recognized Tribal small business owners, it is critical that we right this wrong and ensure that these small businesses have equal opportunity to access critical federal relief programs.”

And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I'm Simon Jaynes. Thanks for listening and have a great day.