

This is Casey Dolan with your local news for Wednesday, July 20, 2022 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Yesterday, Representative Derek Kilmer led the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress in approving 29 bipartisan recommendations to make the U.S. House more effective by strengthening congressional oversight capacity, continuing discussions on congressional continuity procedures, modernizing the legislative process, and better supporting the offices tasked with serving the American people.

Among the key recommendations passed yesterday:

- The House should offer and support optional programs for members and staff to learn best-practices for conducting bipartisan, fact-based oversight.
- The House should establish a system for bill referral to committees that automates and tracks a bill's progress through the legislative process.
- Congress should establish a joint committee to review House and Senate rules and other matters assuring continuing representation and congressional operations for the American people.

An Olympic Medical Center physician was arrested last Thursday on investigation of sexual assault, which allegedly occurred while he was working at the hospital's emergency room. In coordination with his attorney, Dr. Josiah Hill, 39, of Sequim surrendered himself to the Port Angeles Police Department and was booked into Clallam County Jail, where he was being held Thursday on a \$1 million bond. An arrest warrant had been issued for Hill last Wednesday for three counts of indecent liberties by a health care provider and one count of second-degree rape of a vulnerable victim. The police department had been investigating Hill since April after an adult female reported being assaulted while receiving treatment at Olympic Medical Center (OMC), said Detective Sergeant Kori Malone to the *Peninsula Daily News*. Malone said after the first victim came forward, three more unrelated women made separate reports of sexual assault by Hill while at OMC. Three of the incidents occurred this year, while a fourth – still under investigation – occurred in 2021, Malone said. According to court documents, multiple women reported that Hill had made inappropriate comments before touching their breasts. In another report, a woman said she was taken to OMC by police, and when she awoke, she was being sexually assaulted by a male doctor.

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are seeking public input on new definitions for old-growth and mature forests on federal land needing protection. This comes under Executive Order 14072, "Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies," issued April 22, 2022 by President Joe Biden as a measure to combat climate change. The burning of old growth forests releases more carbon into the atmosphere than those of younger forests.

But the question is disputed over what exactly the government must protect. Environmentalists say millions of acres of public land qualify. The timber industry is concerned about broad definitions impacting logging. Two engagement sessions have been set for employees of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management on August 1 and 3 in an effort to gather suggestions. There is also a 30-day period for employees to comment that coincides with a period of public input on the Federal Register.

(<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/07/15/2022-15185/request-for-information-rfi-on-federal-old-growth-and-mature-forests>)

Richard Welches of Port Angeles, 28 years old, was sentenced last Wednesday to 22 years in prison followed by 12 months of supervision by the state Department of Corrections, according to the Olympic Peninsula Narcotics Enforcement Team, an anti-drug task force made up of multiple law enforcement agencies. Welches pleaded guilty to three counts of possession with intent to deliver for fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine; three counts of unlawful possession of a firearm in the second degree; and two counts of possession of a stolen firearm. Welches is a convicted felon and prohibited from having firearms. Law enforcement had gone to Welches' home to serve an outstanding warrant in September 2020 and found 463 grams of suspected methamphetamine, 10 grams of heroin, \$14,868 in cash and two rifles, one of which had previously been reported stolen. When law enforcement returned to Welches' home in January 2021 to serve another outstanding warrant, they found eight additional individually packaged balls of heroin, fentanyl pills, suspected LSD, and digital scales. This past May on a third visit from law enforcement, police found Welches hiding in the building's insulation. During that search, officers found nine firearms, five of which were confirmed previously stolen, as well as fentanyl pills, scales, packaging material, and \$1,700 in cash.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Thursday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.