

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Diane Walker with local news and commentary for Thursday, April 11, 2024.

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, and U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, have unveiled the American Privacy Rights Act, draft legislation which sets clear, national data privacy rights and protections for Americans, eliminating the existing patchwork of state comprehensive data privacy laws and establishing robust enforcement mechanisms to hold violators accountable.

The act minimizes the data that companies can collect, keep, and use about people; gives Americans control over where that information goes, including the ability to prevent transfer or sale of their data; and allows individuals to opt out of targeted advertising. It also gives individuals the right to sue and recover damages from those who violate their privacy, requires annual reviews of algorithms to ensure they do not put individuals at risk for harm or discrimination, mandates strong data security standards to limit opportunities for identity theft, and authorizes the Federal Trade Commission, states, and consumers to enforce against violations.

In a press release, Chairs Cantwell and Rodgers write, "Americans deserve the right to control their data and we're hopeful that our colleagues in the House and Senate will join us in getting this legislation signed into law."

Goddard College, which became an accredited college in 1938 and has been at Fort Worden since 2005, has announced it's shutting its doors. The Board of Directors have declared they will close the college at the end of the 2024 Spring term in May, citing declining enrollment and steep financial challenges. The abrupt closure comes after Goddard went completely online in January, a move officials had said was temporary. In the closure announcement, college leaders pointed to "trends of inflationary pressures, demographic shifts, and changing educational preferences." The number of students at Goddard fell from more than 1,900 in the 1970s to 220 today, according to the announcement.

We have much Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) news to report today. Travelers who use the Hood Canal Bridge between Jefferson and Kitsap counties will want to plan additional travel time each weekday April 15 through April 26. Beginning on April 15, WSDOT bridge preservation crews will conduct an in-depth inspection of the bridge. The inspection requires opening the draw span twice daily – 10am and 2:30pm – for up to an hour. During each draw span opening, the bridge is closed to all traffic. Crews will combine inspection-related openings with marine openings when possible. The inspection includes an overall assessment of the bridge's mechanical and electrical systems and requires daylight to see inside tight spaces and get detailed observations on bridge components and operations.

The Washington State DOT has also announced that vehicle reservations for the summer schedule (June 16 through September 21) on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands and Port Townsend/Coupeville ferry routes will be available at 10am next Tuesday, April 16. The summer season release is set three hours later to separate the high traffic demand of the season release from those looking to make a reservation during the daily two-week and two-day releases, which remain at 7am.

The ferry system has also implemented a virtual waiting room to prevent website overload and deliver fair access during this high-demand period. Customers accessing the site who are directed to the waiting room will see their place in line, estimated expected wait time, and will have the option to receive a notification and come back to the site when it is their turn.

And finally, WSDOT installed speed humps yesterday on the mainline entrances to the controversial Kearney Street roundabout. One might question the necessity, considering the overwhelming fear that most Port Townsend residents feel upon entering that roundabout. The effect is yet to be determined.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thanks for listening.