

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Rachel Perkins, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

One of the firefighters nabbed in the Bear Gulch Immigration Raid on August 27 has been released and returned home with his family. The raid resulted in two wildland firefighting crews being detained and two crew members taken into custody as alleged "illegal aliens." The immigration raid on an active fire shocked wildland firefighters and has led to elected officials at the national, state, and local levels seeking to "protect, not persecute" first responders, as our congressional representative, Emily Randall, said.

Rigoberto Hernandez was released after nearly four weeks in detention at the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, according to Matt Adams, the legal director of the Northwest Immigration Rights Project, as reported by Alex Brown of Stateline. What strikes reporter Mark Rose the most about a photo of Hernandez after his release is the charred and ash-encrusted yellow fire-resistant shirt he's wearing. That's what he must have been wearing when they trapped the two crews on Bear Gulch. Hernandez has been in this country since he was four, and he was on his fire crew for three years. He earned every smudge on that fire shirt, scraping and digging and clawing through the ash. That's what he wears proudly after thirty days in detention. That's the statement he gives, full of humility and gratitude. These are the "dangerous criminals" that ICE is targeting.

U.S. Representative Emily Randall has sponsored the Emergency Response Location Protection Act (H.R. 5603), to limit immigration enforcement in designated emergency areas. She condemned the Bear Gulch immigration raid. "This is wrong and dangerous," Randall said. "That's why I'm introducing the Emergency Responder Protection Act to ensure our first responders can do their jobs without looking over their shoulders. When disaster strikes, our priority must be community safety – not advancing political agendas. Our firefighters, paramedics and emergency personnel run toward danger when others run away. They deserve our protection, not our persecution."

The Jefferson County Commissioners are considering several options and are likely to support a statewide initiative or collaborate with other counties. What action they take remains to be seen, but they are committed to taking a stand to protect first responders against the kind of shameful raid that happened at Bear Gulch.

Reporting on this story by Mark Rose.

A contentious new sales tax on services that Democratic state lawmakers relied on to pay for Washington's latest budget is set to take effect Wednesday. Senate Bill 5814 is one of the biggest moneymakers used to bring in an estimated \$3.6 billion over the next two years to fill a shortfall in the operating budget. This law is expected to fuel \$1.1 billion in the two-year budget that began July 1, and \$2.6 billion over four years. Hundreds of millions of dollars will also flow to local governments, as they get a share of state sales tax proceeds. But a key piece of the new law is in question.

Cable juggernaut Comcast believes the measure's sales tax on advertising services is illegal and is suing to get it overturned. The state attorney general's office is expected to respond to the lawsuit in Thurston County Superior Court in the coming weeks. It could be months before a judge weighs in on the provision's future. The tax on advertising services is specifically expected to bring in roughly \$475 million over the next four years. It's unclear what would happen to collections made under the new tax if the law is later ruled invalid, a state Department of Revenue spokesperson said. The law earns the state money by applying the retail sales tax to more services. Beyond advertising, it covers temporary staffing (\$833 million over four years), security (\$127

million), live presentations (\$360 million), and information technology (\$189 million), among others. Temporary staffing services hospitals use are exempt. A block on the tax would throw a major kink into the \$77.8 billion budget passed after months of negotiations in the Legislature. The next 60-day legislative session begins in January.

Reporting on this story by Jake Goldstein-Street of the *Washington State Standard*.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesdays to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. This is Rachel Perkins. Thanks for listening.