

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 20, 2026.

Because more than 20,000 mail-in ballots in Washington's primary election were rejected this year due to late post-marking election officials are encouraging voters to cast ballots earlier for this election, ideally a week before election day for mail-in ballots. They appear to have been successful: according to the Associated Press, approximately 6 million ballots have already been cast across the country.

Indivisible Port Townsend reports that 900 people showed up for Saturday's No Kings gathering, with 300 people proceeding to the Courthouse to deposit their ballots in the ballot box there.

A report recently released from the US Congress Joint Economic Committee has revealed that the war in Iran, tariffs, and cuts to health insurance have cost the average U.S. household \$5,300 more for goods and services since January 2025, including over \$1,100 in housing costs and over \$600 on groceries and electricity. Across the state Washingtonians have paid an additional \$2 billion in gas costs, or close to \$600 per family, and monthly health insurance bills in Washington State are projected to rise by an average of \$1,049 per month.

In related news – thanks to federal law HR1, which was passed this year, funding available for Medicaid and Apple Health recipients is projected to be reduced by nearly a trillion dollars. In addition, the new law is also changing eligibility and renewal requirements.

Starting October 1, 2026, according to Mike Glenn, CEO of Jefferson Healthcare, eligibility rules have changed for certain noncitizens enrolled in Apple Health, including some refugees, asylees, and other lawfully present individuals. But starting January 1, 2027, many adults enrolled in Apple Health for Adults will need to meet new work, training, or community engagement requirements – generally 80 hours a month, unless they qualify for an exemption. At the same time, coverage renewals for Apple Health for Adults will move from once a year to every six months, and the window for retroactive coverage will be shortened.

Not everyone on Apple Health will be affected, and many details are still being finalized by the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA). Eligibility will depend on individual circumstances that only HCA can review. But you can take steps to increase the probability of continuing to be insured by doing the following:

1. Make sure HCA has your correct address, phone number, and email so you don't miss an important notice. You can update this at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/free-or-low-cost-health-care/i-need-medical-dental-or-vision-care/update-my-income-or-address-report-change>.
2. Read every notice from HCA carefully and respond with appropriate action by any deadline listed to keep your coverage.
3. And finally, for eligibility questions, call HCA at 1-800-562-3022 or visit Washington Healthplanfinder at <https://wahealthplanfinder.org/>. For more information about changes associated with H.R. 1, visit hca.wa.gov/hr1-changes.

Two proposed Opportunity Zones in Jefferson County (one in Port Townsend and the other in the Brinnon/West End region) have nominated by Governor Ferguson as Washington Opportunity Zones. The two tracts were

among 99 nominations submitted statewide to the U.S. Treasury Department for federal certification. Opportunity Zones use federal tax incentives to encourage private investment in designated communities. The program could help attract investment in workforce housing, healthcare, local businesses, and community development. The designations are expected to take effect Jan. 1, 2027, pending federal certification.

To learn more, visit <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/opportunity-zones/>.

And finally, it's pumpkin week at the Port Townsend library. Stop by this week and pick up a pumpkin; decorate or carve it at home, and bring it back between October 26 and 30 to be displayed at the library and entered into a special prize drawing. Prizes will be announced on November 1, but you do not need to be present to win.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening.