

# The ‘Iceman’ Runneth: Longtime Roy Resident Launches Longshot Campaign for Governor

**BY ERIC ROSANE**  
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Martin “Iceman” Wheeler pulls up to up to Rainier High School parking lot in a compact Scion hatchback. Wheeler, 61, is a stout man with a moustache. A Minnesota Twins cap covers a mop of greying hair as he sips from a cup of homemade tomato soup.

The car heater hums in the background as we talk — for “security reasons,” his wife says — in the main cab of his vehicle.

Wheeler’s name will be on the primary election ballot this August. He’s not running for local office, though — he’s running to be the next governor of Washington.

Over the last three years, Wheeler, a retired firefighter and former Roy resident of 42 years, has been planning a run for the governor’s office. But without having served in public office, no financial war chest and little to no name recognition, does his long-shot campaign have a chance?

Well, he thinks so. “What they know is I bring a very huge round-arena of police and fire, medicine, schools, agriculture (policies),” Wheeler said. “But I’m not here to ask you to elect me. I’m here because of my father — I’m here because he’s asked me (to) never give up.”

Wheeler, who describes himself as more of a data-driven candidate instead of a traditional speaker, said he’s running for



Eric Rosane / Nisqually Valley News

Martin “Iceman” Wheeler, a former Roy resident of more than 40 years and retired firefighter, prepares to take a photo Saturday at Rainier High School. Wheeler is running for the governor’s office this year and promises to host and visit every county in the state — twice — before the election.

governor on the issues of trash management reform, housing and mental health, education, reform of the Washington State Department of Transportation and work toward regulations that benefit law-abiding gun owners and law enforcement.

Wheeler is CEO of Oak Hills Farms, which he describes as a network of vegetable farms based in Fall City. The farm, which now grows mostly potatoes, rhubarb and onions, was originally founded by Wheeler’s father more than

half a century ago in the rural outskirts of Roy.

After Wheeler’s retirement in 2001 from the fire department that would eventually become Central Pierce Fire and Rescue, he helped move his family farm from Roy to Fall City, near Snoqualmie.

Being a farming family, the Wheelers also have a hand in selling wholesale produce at farmers markets across the state. Wheeler said his father also helped found the Olympia Farmers Market.

Wheeler said he has an associ-

ate’s degree from Tacoma Community College and studied at Western Washington University.

“Iceman” originally threw his hat into the race because his peers wanted him to deregulate code enforcement so firefighters could carry weapons on fire engines.

Wheeler said he had pushed for his department’s right to carry weapons long before his coworkers approached him about the issue.

“They knew that I was around the Olympia arena with the farm-

ers market,” Wheeler said. “Basically, I took about 2 seconds to say ‘yes’ in my heart, but I got tons of counsel. And then we put the strategy together.”

The state hasn’t voted in a Republican governor for nearly 40 years. The argument Wheeler gives for Democrats to vote for him is one of promoting and preserving inherent freedoms.

“They are tired of the way things are running right now and it boils down to the Second Amendment. I’ve never seen such a roar of displeasure,” Wheeler said of the Democratic Party.

More than a dozen candidates, including incumbent Gov. Jay Inslee, have announced their candidacy for governor, according to Ballotpedia. More than anything, Wheeler will likely face major hurdles in beating out five other Republicans.

Wheeler says he believes he’ll be the Republican candidate who will be able to flip the state red because he’ll be an open, honest person who will advocate for agriculture, police, public safety and schools.

As for his nickname, Wheeler said he originally got that from serving shaved ice at the farmers market.

“It came from the kids,” Wheeler said. “The kids began to say ‘Hey, there’s Iceman.’ And I said, OK, that’s what we’re going to gravitate toward. Iceman. If you don’t have the farmers markets on your side, you’re not getting elected.”

## Thurston County Commissioners Submit Draft County Habitat Conservation Plan

**BY NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS STAFF**

Last week, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners submitted the third draft habitat conservation plan (HCP) to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

USFWS oversees the Endangered Species Act and the ESA-protected species in Thurston County.

According to the county, the HCP provides guidance on how the county will offset construction impacts to the habitat of protected species resulting from development approved by the county. The intent of the plan is to obtain a federal Incidental Take Permit (ITP). The ITP provides federal regulatory coverage for most applicants who receive a county building permit. The HCP allows for property owners and project developers to use property occupied by federally protected species by allowing them to pay for mitigation elsewhere in the county, via mitigation credits administered by the county.

The HCP replaces the project-by-project site reviews and mitigation process property owners and project developers currently must complete. Such a process carries uncertainties associated with time and costs. The HCP provides a more predictable, streamlined and local permitting process for public and private development in Thurston County, saving time and effort to project applicants, according to the county.

The next steps for the HCP include a review by USFWS. County residents will also have multiple opportunities to review and provide input as the county moves through the approval and implementation process.

To learn more about the HCP, visit: <https://www.thurston-countywa.gov/planning/Pages/hcp.aspx>.

## Bill Would Increase Cooperation With Immigration Enforcement Activities

**BY NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS STAFF**

Legislation proposed by 19th District State Rep. Jim Walsh, R-Aberdeen, would increase cooperation between city, county and state jurisdictions on federal immigration enforcement efforts, according to a press release from Washington House Republicans.

“The politics and rhetoric around immigration has limited our ability to assure the safety of Washingtonians,” Walsh said in the release. “Trust between local and federal law enforcement is essential to the fabric of our democracy. Breaking that trust damages our communities and leaves people unprotected. It’s time to stop the quibbling and begin working with federal authorities to assure security threats are dealt with appropriately.”

House Bill 2226 would “guarantee cooperation and communication between local and state law enforcement and federal immigration authorities,” according to the press release.

It would do so by removing prohibitions on state agencies —

including the Washington State Patrol, sheriff’s offices, police departments and others — from assisting federal immigration efforts. Money and resources would also be made available.

Walsh said preventing local law enforcement officials from otherwise reporting lawfully detained individuals places a greater emphasis on the interests of those in the country illegally than citizens and legal residents.

“It’s time to dismantle the false premise that cooperation is wrong or somehow not compassionate,” Walsh said. “Public officials are sworn to protect their constituents. That’s exactly what my bill looks to do. Instead of obstructing, let’s try cooperating so everyone stays safe.”

## Inslee Announces State LGBTQ Commission

**BY NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS STAFF**

Gov. Jay Inslee this week announced the appointment of 15 people to serve on Washington’s new LGBTQ Commission.

J. Manny Santiago was named commission director in August. The LGBTQ Commission, established by the Legislature, was signed into law by Inslee in April of last year. The commission was established to identify the needs of the LGBTQ community and advocate for equality and inclusion in all aspects of state government.

“It is incredibly important to have a commission focused on this needs of the LGBTQ community in our state,” Inslee said. “The commission will be a valuable resource to all Washingtonians and

provide recommendations and advice to my office, the Legislature and state agencies on issues important to all LGBTQ people.”

All appointments to the commission are effective immediately.

“This is an incredibly diverse group of people to serve on the LGBTQ Commission,” Santiago said. “The collective experience of this group on issues that affect LGBTQ Washingtonians of every background will be crucial as we continue to advance LGBTQ rights in our state. These people represent every corner of our state and I look forward to working with them to identify the needs of our community throughout Washington.”

The appointees were chosen by the governor with input from members of the state House and Senate and community stakeholders. Commissioners will serve three-year staggered terms.

The appointees are Marsha Botzer, Ingersoll Gender Center, King County; Alvaro Figueroa, Avista Corporation, Spokane County; Josette Ross, Nisqually Indian Tribe, Pierce County; Karen Goldsen, University of Washington, Island County; Matt Landers, GSBA, King County; Jac Archer, Spokane Human Rights Commission, Spokane County; Michelle Kelly-Barroga, Oasis Youth Center, Pierce County; Isyss Honnen, Pride Foundation, King County; Everett Maroon, Blue Mountain Heart to Heart, Walla Walla County; Beto Yarce, Ventures, Snohomish County; Maeve Griffith, City of Spokane, Spokane County; Steven Sawyer, People of Color Against Aids Network, King County; Jeffrey Robinson, Franklin Co. Dem Committee, Franklin County; Tobi Hill-Meyer, Gender Justice League, Thurston County; Lars Erickson, WSDOT, King County.

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