

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Carmen Jaramillo with local news for October 19, 2021.

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Yesterday marked the deadline for health care workers and state employees to get vaccinated under Governor Jay Inslee's vaccine mandate announced in August. Inslee was clear, get vaccinated by Oct. 18 or lose your job. Republican lawmakers have heavily criticized the mandate as an abuse of power and unconstitutional. A last-ditch effort to stop the mandate was shot down in Thurston County Superior Court Monday. A request for an emergency injunction in a lawsuit brought by several hundred state employees against Inslee's mandate was denied. As of yet, fears of a mass exodus of employees potentially bringing state services to a halt have not come to fruition. The mandate covers transportation, education, health care and corrections. Inslee announced Thursday that 90% of state employees are now vaccinated, that number up from 64% earlier this month. Many workers have been able to apply for religious or medical exemptions from the order and labor unions throughout the state are still negotiating accommodations or extensions.

Local school districts are boasting vaccination rates among employees in the high 80s or 90s. The majority of districts are not expecting to lose any employees. Chimacum School District is losing five employees but expects to be easily able to absorb the impacts with some reorganization, Superintendent Scott Mauk said. At each school all certified staff, like teachers, are fully vaccinated.

Jefferson Healthcare will lose three employees to the mandate, Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry told the Board of County Commissioners last week. While losing any employees is hard, she said this is not expected to greatly impact operations. Olympic Medical Center in Port Angeles has about 40 employees who are at risk of termination because of the mandate, Berry said.

Jefferson county PUD announced this week that they have chosen to mandate vaccines for all of their employees, although not necessarily required by the state. Under Inslee's order, only certain PUD employees who fulfill contracts with the state would need to get vaccinated, but the agency has decided to have a blanket requirement for their entire staff according to a press release. The Jefferson County Commissioners discussed the possibility of a mandate for county employees Monday. Commissioners Kate Dean and Greg Brotherton said they did not feel any particular need to move forward with a mandate for employees considering that there have been no known transmissions at county offices and that a federal or state mandate could supersede the need to enact it at the local level. The board previously said that the risk of losing workers in already hard-to-fill positions was one reason they were not ready to move forward with a blanket mandate for county employees.

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If we are able to continue to increase rates of vaccination and decrease case counts of COVID-19 over the winter, the pandemic very well may end in Spring 2022, Dr. Tom Locke told the Board of County Commissioners Monday. Case counts, deaths, and hospitalizations are down nationally, meaning that the most recent wave of COVID-19 is ending, but if we aren't vigilant another surge will come around Christmas and extend the pandemic even further. "The stakes have never really been higher," he said. Jefferson County Public Health added 7 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday bringing the total confirmed case count to 1,071. 20 cases are in active isolation.

This week Jefferson County has the lowest case rate in the entire state of Washington, with San Juan County and King County following behind. Locke said it isn't a coincidence that the three counties with the lowest case rates also have the highest rates of vaccination. Roughly 70% of Jefferson County residents have been fully vaccinated. The goal is to reach 90% or higher in order to end the spread of the virus Locke said. Locke said he

believes the rise in vaccinations nationwide means that vaccine mandates are working. Moving forward, he said we should expect more vaccine mandates not less, as they are proving to be a strong incentive for the vaccine hesitant.

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The setting of a new Netflix series released earlier this month may seem eerily familiar to some locals. *Maid* is set in the fictional town of Port Hampstead, Washington and based on the memoirs of author Stephanie Land when she lived and worked in Port Townsend. The story follows Alex, a homeless single mother in her twenties with no support system in her struggle to leave an abusive relationship. In the first episode she takes a job with a maid service and commutes across the ferry to a fictionalized Whidbey Island. While the setting is slightly vague and the show shot in British Columbia, listen closely and you may be able to hear characters reference iconic Port Townsend businesses like Pennysaver and Waterfront Pizza.

*Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* is the 2019 hit book which debuted at #3 on the New York Times Bestseller List and was included by former President Barack Obama in his 2019 summer reading list. Obama described the book as an “unflinching look at America’s class divide” and “ a reminder of the dignity of all work.” The series run is limited to 10 episodes and is not expected to be picked up for a sequel. Since its debut on October 1, *Maid* has consistently ranked in Netflix’s top ten.

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And that’s it for today’s local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I’m Carmen Jaramillo. Thanks for listening.