

Local News – October 1, 2020: Kilmer seeks to streamline government, burn ban rescinded.

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, October 1, 2020.

First, the numbers. Jefferson County's COVID 19 cases remain stable at 71, with 53 people awaiting test results. Port Townsend Air Quality is in 62, in the moderate range. The general election takes place in 33 days.

And the election. It just keeps getting, um, more interesting. November 3 is neither the beginning nor the end of the modern political adventure. Ballots are mailed to voters on October 14, or three weeks from yesterday.

As soon as ballots are mailed out, the Auditor's office at the Jefferson County Courthouse will become a voting center. In addition to the courthouse ballots are accepted at five locations across the county. As of this week, the boxes are all repaired and ready for ballots.

Not everyone is registered, for one reason or another. Unregistered people have until October 26, eight days before the election to register online or by mail, or they can register in person up to 8 pm on November 3, when the polls close. Early voting is encouraged by, well, just about everybody.

Currently Jefferson County has 29,719 registered voters of which 27,056 are active. The most recent county population total is 31,729, but they are not all eligible to vote.

Last week, the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress led by our own U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer passed its fifth and final package of recommendations to make Congress work better for the American people. The 40 new recommendations were approved unanimously by the bipartisan committee. The recommendations include reforms to help Congress improve the congressional schedule and calendar, boost congressional capacity and reform the budget and appropriations process. The final vote brings the total recommendations passed by the Select Committee to 97 this Congress.

The Federal budget is one area in need of streamlining. To this end the committee recommends establishing an annual Fiscal State of the Nation report, to better inform the public how tax dollars are expended, require a biennial budget resolution and establish a realistic budget timeline. These measures presumably would prevent the twice-yearly ritual of needing to reauthorize the budget on the eve of a government shutdown.

While we seek to protect ourselves from COVID 19, we can't forget our yearly flu vaccination. Jefferson Healthcare is now scheduling appointments for flu vaccination, which is an important component of an individual's wellness plan, according to a press release. Drive-up appointments limit potential exposure to respiratory illness, reduce the amount of PPE used and are very convenient.

Primary Care Clinics offers both drive-up and in-clinic vaccination. Drive-up Flu shot appointments can be scheduled through the Sheridan Clinic in Port Townsend, the drive-up clinic in Port Ludlow and in Quilcene.

Because healthcare systems across the country and world are already fearing another surge of COVID-19 cases during the Fall and Winter, there is concern a wave of influenza infections could overwhelm strained hospitals and clinics.

According to the hospital, protecting all members of our community through vaccination is an important initiative. By vaccinating families on time, we build a community of immunity around vulnerable populations like babies and seniors.

Beginning today, the Jefferson County Burn Ban is no longer in effect. However, land clearing burning is by permit only. Outdoor recreational fires, outdoor fire burning materials other than rubbish, and other small fires are allowed. Fires used for debris or rubbish disposal are illegal.

The decision resulted from the recent changes in weather in western Washington, the forecasted precipitation, lower temperatures, and high humidity levels over the last week have helped to abate the fire hazard conditions in Jefferson County. As always, basic fire safety is important. The increased moisture can provide a false sense of security as dry conditions continue and there is not a lot of precipitation in the forecast for at least the next 8-10 days, according to the county.

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This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.