

**RCW 36.46.010 Notice, mediation required—Procedure.** (1) Before a lawsuit may be commenced in disputes between elected officials, as the term "elected official" is defined in subsection (7) of this section, in their official capacity, the party bringing the claim must first notify in writing the other parties to the claim. The notice must:

(a) Request mediation to occur;

(b) Notify all interested parties that mediation must take place within ninety days of providing notice; and

(c) Include a copy of this section.

(2) The making of a written, good faith notice requesting mediation prior to commencing a lawsuit by the party bringing the claim as provided in subsection (1) of this section tolls the statute of limitations until the ninetieth day from the date of notice, or the day following the date set in subsection (5) of this section, or mediation ends, whichever is later.

(3) After the notice of mediation has been provided to all interested parties, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, all interested parties must mediate pursuant to the process set forth in this section within ninety days or by the date set in subsection (5) of this section. If any party refuses to mediate, fails to mediate in good faith, or if mediation does not resolve the claim, the party bringing the claim may commence a lawsuit on the claim upon the passage of the 90th [ninetieth] day from the date of notice or the day following the date set in subsection (5) of this section, whichever is later.

(4) The mediator shall be agreed upon by the parties. If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator, any party may petition for the appointment of a mediator. Once a party petitions for the appointment of a mediator, no other party may petition for the appointment of a mediator. The petition shall be filed in the superior court of the county in which one of the parties serves as an elected official. If one of the parties in the action is a superior court judge, then the petition may not be filed in the superior court in which that judge serves. If any party is a superior court judge and all the parties serve in the same county, the action shall be filed in an adjacent county.

(5) Upon designation of a mediator by the parties or the court, the mediator and the parties or the parties' representatives shall establish a date for the mediation. If a date cannot be agreed upon within ten days of the designation or appointment of the mediator, a party may petition the court, as set forth in subsection (4) of this section, to set a date for the mediation. The mediation shall occur within ninety days from the day the notice is provided under subsection (1) of this section, or on a later date if agreed to by all parties and the mediator or as scheduled by the court.

(6) Costs of the mediation, including reasonable compensation for the mediator's services, shall be paid equally by the parties unless the superior court determines otherwise in its order appointing the mediator. The details of those costs, and the compensation of the mediator, must be set forth in a mediation agreement between the mediator and all parties, or in the order appointing the mediator. Unless otherwise agreed, and except for sharing the costs of the mediator, each party shall bear its own costs and expenses, including legal fees and witness expenses, in connection with the mediation proceeding. If the matter is not resolved by mediation and the parties

cannot agree as to how costs are assessed among the parties, the court that resolves the matter shall determine how costs are assessed among the parties.

(7) For the purposes of this section, "elected official" means:

(a) Any elected or appointed county officer as enumerated in RCW 36.16.030;

(b) Equivalent positions whether elected or appointed in charter counties; and

(c) Superior, district, and municipal court judges located within the county. [2019 c 463 s 1.]