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April 7-11


**AMERICA
SAVES
WEEK**

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your past, present
and future!

FROM DIRECTOR CLARK'S DESK

Continuing to Serve Washington Financial Institutions

In January, Governor Ferguson [reappointed me as the Director of the Washington State Department of Financial Institutions \(DFI\)](#). I was truly honored that the Governor placed his trust in me to continue to lead our agency, and I look forward to the opportunity to work in furtherance of our mission to protect consumers and advance the financial health of Washington State by providing fair regulation of financial services and educating consumers to make informed financial decisions.



On Feb. 5, 2025, the Washington State Senate Business, Financial Services and Trade Committee held my confirmation hearing where I shared my background and views on leading the agency. Coincidentally, the day of the confirmation hearing marked my 20th year in public service, having first represented DFI as its assigned assistant attorney general for almost seven years and then working in various roles at DFI. I care deeply about this agency and our stakeholders including consumers and financial services providers, and was pleased that the Committee unanimously voted in favor of a "do pass" recommendation to the full Senate and appreciate the full Senate voting to confirm my appointment.

Now in my sixth year as DFI's Director, it is not lost on me that I would not be in this role if it were not for a lot of people. First, I am appreciative to have the support of Governor Ferguson, and it is a privilege to serve on his cabinet. Second, our staff at DFI are truly committed to our mission and serving our stakeholders, and I am thankful to lead our talented DFI team. Third, the industries we regulate, consumer advocates, and legislators were supportive of my reappointment and confirmation, and I am humbled to have received such support. To me, all of this support validated our agency's commitment through the past years to operating in a fair and transparent way while being accessible to stakeholders, all in service of our agency mission. I look forward to continuing these efforts for years to come!

Charlie Clark,
Director, Department of Financial Institutions

Director Charlie Clark congratulated by Senator Claudia Kauffman, Chair of the Senate Business, Financial Services and Trade Committee.



MORTGAGE BANKERS DAY ON THE HILL

On Feb. 5, the Washington Mortgage Bankers Association (WMBA) came together at the capitol to share concerns about the latest issues in the mortgage industry, to discuss with lawmakers how policy is impacting communities in our region, and to advocate for homeownership for all.

Director Clark, along with DFI Deputy Director Catherine Mele and Policy Director Drew Bouton, met with WMBA Board Members during the day on the hill event.



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DIVISION OF BANKS

DIVISION OF BANKS 'AT A GLANCE' (as of Dec. 31, 2024)

Commercial Banks
Regulated
28

Savings Banks
Regulated
7

Trust Companies
Regulated
18

Branch of Foreign
Banks Regulated
1

Total Banking
Assets Regulated
\$101.28 billion

Total Trust Assets
Under Management
\$60.94 billion

State Chartered
Banks Complaints
109

*Increase from
86 in 2023*

MAINTAINING DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

Agency Director Clark and Division of Banks Director Hollinshead Meet with Chairman Powell and Other State and Federal Leaders

In his role as Chair of the Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS), Director Clark led a discussion in Washington D.C. on Apr. 1, 2025. In attendance was Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell, members of the Federal Reserve Board, and other state financial regulatory leaders including Director of Banks Roberta Hollinshead.

During his time in the capitol, Director Clark was joined by the CSBS Executive Committee for a meeting with Acting Chairman of the FDIC, Travis Hill. DFI believes it is critical that states maintain direct communication with leaders of federal regulatory agencies who share supervisory responsibilities. Regular meetings with our federal partners, especially policy makers, helps us more effectively jointly regulate our state chartered banks.



DFI Director Clark and Banks Director Hollinshead visiting the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

INCREASE IN IMPERSONATION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO STEAL GOLD

[According to an FBI alert](#), an increasing trend in fraud activity centers on scammers pretending to be government officials to steal gold and other precious metals.

As described in a recent [DFI Consumer Alert \(from Jan. 30, 2025\)](#), scammers make contact via phone, email, texts, social media, pop-ups, and/or fake tech support with a warning about a hacked account. They instruct victims to withdraw cash and convert it to gold, claiming this will "protect" their money. Scammers then send a "courier" to pick up the gold, and disappear.



If you think you're a victim immediately report suspicious activity to the FBI at www.ic3.gov.



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CYBER HYGIENE BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUR BANK TO IMPLEMENT TODAY

As we move into 2025, US-based financial institutions continue to face threats on many fronts:

- Ransomware Remains a Significant Threat: Scammers use phishing and other tricks to gain access to systems.
- Weaknesses in Software and Hardware: Out of date software and hardware provide an attractive and frequently exploited avenue for cyber criminals.
- Geopolitical Threats Pose Additional Risk to Banks: The stories we hear in the news are only a portion of the activity by foreign countries aiming to disrupt our financial institutions.



Cyber hygiene practices are effective deterrents to the threats listed above. According to Director Jen Easterly of the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), even “[basic cyber hygiene prevents 98% of cyber-attacks](#).” These cyber hygiene programs generally include well-known controls that have been employed in financial institutions for years, such as:

- An asset inventory management program that captures all organizational IT assets,
- A comprehensive and robust vulnerability and patch management program,
- Strong passwords supported by a robust password management policy,
- Implement [phishing-resistant multi-factor authentication \(MFA\)](#),
- A comprehensive [third-party risk management program](#) for vendors,
- Effective backups for core processing, network administration, and other critical services,
- A robust cybersecurity awareness training program, including periodic phishing testing for all,
- Subscribe to alerts from [FS-ISAC](#), [FBI InfraGard](#), and [CISA](#), and/or,
- Development and testing of an incident response plan for cyber incidents.



Along with the foundational cyber hygiene practices above, CISA provides no-cost [cyber hygiene services](#) to financial institutions. **DFI strongly recommends that financial institutions consider implementing these free CISA services.**

To learn more about these services or to enroll, visit CISA’s Cyber Hygiene Services page at <https://www.cisa.gov/cyber-hygiene-services>.

COMMUNITY BANKERS DAY ON THE HILL

On Feb. 19, the Division of Banks participated in Community Bankers Day on the Hill. In addition to topics on the expected changes in regulation, discussions also included Q4 financial results, and the transitional state of the Federal government.

[Community Bankers of Washington](#) hosted the event and is an important trade group representing many state-chartered community banks.

Matt Harvey, Program Manager with the DFI Division of Banks, presenting at the event.



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DIVISION OF CREDIT UNIONS

DIVISION OF CREDIT UNIONS 'AT A GLANCE' (as of Dec. 31, 2024)

State-Chartered
Credit Unions
Regulated
48

No change
from 2023

Total Credit
Union Members
Covered
4.6 million

Up 100,000
from 2023

Total Credit
Union Assets
Regulated
\$84.5 billion

No change
from 2023

Consumer
Complaints
Received
404

Increase from
321 in 2023

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE AMERICA'S CREDIT UNIONS GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CONFERENCE (GAC)

As the premier event for credit union advocates, GAC empowers connections between industry leaders to influence policy, and drive positive change. This year's theme was *'Together We Move - Moving with purpose. Moving with passion. Moving with strength.'*

Key Conference Takeaways

- 1) Washington was represented at the GAC by flag bearer Frank Worden, now in his 51st(!) year of volunteer financial board service.
- 2) There was a lot of energy at the event, with discussions about the future of how legislation may impact financial services, and about the evolution of the NCUA.
- 3) The "Crashers." The 2025 Crash the GAC delegation comprised of [55 talented credit union professionals](#) from across the country who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to the credit union movement. Their purpose is to connect emerging leaders to our industry's brightest minds.



DFI Director of Credit Unions, Amy Hunter, with Frank Worden and the Washington flag.

NASCUS Regulator Board Chair Katie Averill (Iowa Division of Credit Unions) and Vice Chair Amy Hunter (DFI) join CUbroadcast's Mike Lawson in the GAC Studio Lounge to share insights on their state systems and NASCUS's efforts to support regulators and credit unions. <https://vimeo.com/1066243306>



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ISSUING RATING FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS & TECHNOLOGY (IS&T) EXAMS

Starting Jan. 6, 2025, the Division of Credit Unions (DCU) will resume issuing a separate Information Systems and Technology (IS&T) composite rating with the CAMELS ratings. With the rise of cybersecurity threats, this rating should provide management a clear measure of the overall level of risk and help to prioritize controls to protect member information.

The IS&T composite rating is determined through a comprehensive evaluation of the credit union's Information Security Program based on the credit union's size, complexity, and risk profile. When the IS&T portion of the exam identifies areas of weakness, those items will generally be incorporated into the Examination Issues and/or Examiner's Findings.

The IS&T composite rating ranges from 1-thru-5, with 1 representing the least risk, and 5 representing the most risk. More detail about the rating system, including further explanations of the 1-thru-5 rating system, can be found in a [Division of Credit Unions Bulletin \(from Jan. 2, 2025\)](#).

If you have any questions about this bulletin, please contact the Division of Credit Unions at dcu@dfi.wa.gov or (360) 902-8701.

RECOGNIZING OUR IS&T PROGRAM RATING TEAM

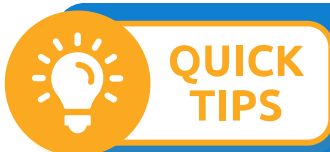
If you've recently gone through an exam, then you are likely to have interacted with **Angelika Mayen** and **Larry Greiner**. Working with both the very small, and the very large credit unions, they are a resource that is helping tailor the IS&T evaluation process, while working to assess the controls each credit union currently has in place.

"Larry brings a great sense of humor, and I appreciate the very practical technical knowledge he adds to the internal side," Angelika shared about working with Larry.

Larry responded by noting, "Angelika brings this great viewpoint from a background with a different type of reporting. She's been such a strength not just to me, but to all the credit unions we interact with as well."

They both agree that any truly effective program is based on building a relationship with the credit unions. They also shared that it is not uncommon for individuals to reach out months after their examination to just ask a question. And they are happy to help!

If you have questions and/or concerns about DCU's IS&T program, contact the Division of Credit Unions at dcu@dfi.wa.gov or (360) 902-8701.



Preparing for Credit Union Examination? Review DFI's Jan. 30 bulletin for information about areas of review during credit union examinations in 2025. https://dfi.wa.gov/sites/default/files/credit-unions/bulletins/B-25-02_1.pdf



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DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES

DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES 'AT A GLANCE' (as of Dec. 31, 2024)

NUMBER OF LICENSEES

Mortgage Brokers	367
Loan Originators	22,219
Check Cashers and Sellers	83
Consumer Loan Companies	1,060
Money Transmitters	244
Escrow Agents	36
Payday Lenders	11

Complaints Received	1,281
Enforcement Actions Issued	63
Investigations Opened	62
Investigations Closed	53

EXAMS CONDUCTED

Check Cashers	11
Money Transmitters	52
Mortgage Brokers	128
Mortgage Origination	243
Mortgage Servicing	60
Student Loan Servicing	3
Escrow	12

QUICK TIPS: PREPARING FOR CS EXAMINATION

From the [Winter 2025 Division of Consumer Services Newsletter](#)



How prepared is your company for an examination?

To best be prepared, please keep the following essential steps in mind.

Keep your business records organized: Be sure to keep your business records organized. Copies of your documents should be stored systematically for timely, routine access.

Know how to pull reports from your electronic systems: Be familiar with how to pull reports from your electronic systems. You will be required to provide transaction and financial records for the examination.

State Examination System (SES): The Department utilizes the State Examination System (SES) for examinations of certain license types. If you are selected for an examination in SES, you will need to ensure you add a Supervisory Activity Contact into the system. The examination will then be conducted almost exclusively through the system. Review the [About SES page](#) for more information. Familiarize yourself with the QuickIR feature which allows your company to browse through the standard information requests in SES and prepare your responses to the IRs in advance of an examination.

Exam correspondence via BOX.com: The Department utilizes BOX.com to receive exam correspondence on exams conducted outside of SES. If you do not have an existing account from a previous examination with us, you will be asked to create a free individual account.

If you have any questions about your examination obligations or your compliance with Washington requirements, please feel free to contact the Department at CSExamsUnit@dfi.wa.gov.



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IMPORTANT RULEMAKING UPDATE FOR 2025

From the [Winter 2025 Division of Consumer Services Newsletter](#)

The Division of Consumer Services adopted amended rules under the Check Cashers and Sellers Act rules, chapter 208-630 WAC. Effective March 1, 2025, the information system database fee payday lender licensees pay per loan increased from \$1.00 to \$2.00.

The Department has also initiated additional new rulemaking:

- [CR 101: Home Equity Sharing Agreement \(HESA\) Products Rulemaking](#)
- [CR 101: Predatory Loan Prevention Act \(SB 6025\) Rulemaking](#)

Visit [DFI's rulemaking webpage](#) to review all rulemaking documents.



WIRE TRANSFER FRAUD: KEEP YOUR BUSINESS SAFE

From the [Winter 2025 Division of Consumer Services Newsletter](#)

The Division of Consumer Services is concerned with the significant increase in wire transfer fraud cases. According to the FTC, consumers lost more than \$10 billion to fraud in 2023. Bank transfers and payments accounted for the highest aggregate losses (\$1.86 billion).



One scam that often makes use of fraudulent wire transfers is Business Email Compromise (BEC). In a BEC scam, the criminal sends his target an email that appears to be from someone the target knows, making a seemingly legitimate request. BEC scams can be extremely sophisticated, making it difficult for potential victims to recognize that they are being targeted.

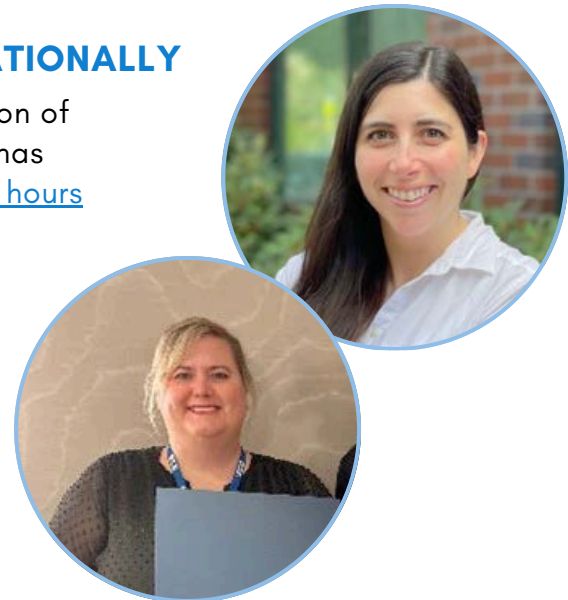
The Division recommends visiting our updated [information security resources](#) website. Licensees are encouraged to review the best practices and additional resources to help maintain and enhance their posture in accordance with industry standards and regulatory expectations.

CONSUMER SERVICES STAFF: LEADING THE WAY NATIONALLY

Congratulations to **Anya Tabb** and **Lindsay Stenger**, two Division of Consumer Services staff recently recognized for their work that has impacts nationally. [Both Anya and Lindsay have dedicated many hours to helping improve state supervision of non-bank entities.](#)

The Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS) named Anya as Network Supervision Champion for her work developing and testing the new One Company, One Exam protocol.

The CSBS Education Foundation Board of Trustees awarded Lindsay the 2024 Examiner of the Year Award for her contributions as an instructor for CSBS.



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DIVISION OF SECURITIES

DIVISION OF SECURITIES 'AT A GLANCE' (as of Dec. 31, 2024)

NUMBER OF LICENSEES

Securities Brokers Dealers	1,697
Investment Advisers	645
Investment Adviser Representatives	14,753
Securities Salespersons	227,450
Registered Securities Offerings	73
Registered Franchise Offerings	1,023
Registered Business Opportunities	3

Enforcement Results

January 2024 - December 2024

Complaints Received

335

Enforcement Actions Issued

92

SECURITIES DIVISION ADOPTED NEW RULES FOR BROKER-DEALERS AND SALESPERSONS (CHAPTER 460-20C WAC)

DFI's Securities Division completed its rulemaking to modernize the rules applicable to securities broker-dealers and their salespersons.

Effective Oct. 13, 2024, DFI adopted a new chapter of rules at [Chapter 460-20C WAC](#) and repealed the prior rules in Chapters 460-20B WAC, 460-21B WAC, and 460-22B WAC. The update adds consistency with current federal law and FINRA rules, incorporates NASAA model rules, and describes the current application filing procedures and registration requirements.

The text of Chapter 460-20C WAC can be found in the published [adopted rules](#), with a summary available in the [section-by-section analysis](#). Key updates include, but are not limited to:

- Clarification of the current application procedures for registering as a broker-dealer or salesperson of a broker-dealer, including non-FINRA member broker-dealers.
- Addition of requirement for persons who supervise salespersons to also register as salesperson.
- Adoption of the NASAA Model Rule to extend the validity of exam scores for up to five years for persons who participate in the FINRA Maintaining Qualifications Program and the NASAA Examination Validity Extension Program.
- Addition of a requirement for the notification of branch office on Form BR.
- Addition of a variable annuities sales practices rule based on FINRA Rule 2330.
- Revision of the rule regarding the unethical practices of broker-dealers and salespersons to add additional practices and make reference to Regulation Best Interest.

For more information visit DFI's summary page for Broker-Dealer Rulemaking - Chapter 460-20C WAC at <https://dfi.wa.gov/broker-dealer-rulemaking-chapter-460-20c-wac>.



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DFI JOINS \$106 MILLION MULTISTATE SETTLEMENT WITH VANGUARD

The DFI Securities Division recently announced it joined a taskforce of state securities regulators and the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in a \$106 million settlement with Vanguard Marketing Corporation (VMC) and The Vanguard Group, Inc. (Vanguard).

The taskforce is taking this action against Vanguard for failing to supervise certain registered persons and to disclose potential tax consequences to hundreds of thousands of investors.

"It's inexcusable for companies to not inform investors of potentially high-cost consequences related to changes implemented in their investment products," said DFI Director Charlie Clark. "Our agency continues to work with partners throughout the country to ensure Washington investors are properly informed in a timely manner when their hard-earned money is at stake."

The settlement stems from a three-year multistate investigation coordinated through the North American Securities Administrators Association's (NASAA) Enforcement Section Committee, parallel to a concurrent investigation by the SEC.

More information regarding the Vanguard settlement is available in a [DFI Press Release \(from Jan. 17, 2025\)](#).

If you live in Washington State and have further questions about this settlement, or concerns about other investments or financial professionals, please contact Washington DFI's Securities Division at 360-902-8760 or securities@dfi.wa.gov.

JOIN US!

Learn about current issues & explore the impact of investment adviser licensing, examinations, and enforcement.

RSVP: ialicensing@dfi.wa.gov

 April 29, 2025  10am-Noon

 Ellensburg, WA (CWU Campus)



MULTI-STATE SETTLEMENT WITH GS PARTNERS: MAY 22 DEADLINE

DFI has joined with multiple other states in a settlement with GS Partners.

In November 2023, DFI issued a [statement of charges](#) against GS Partners for violating the Securities Act of Washington. DFI found violations of securities laws and assessed corresponding penalties in connection with their MetaCertificates offerings and multi-level marketing (MLM) scheme. Individuals who deposited funds with GS Partners can now submit a claim to receive the value of their deposits (less withdrawals). **Impacted investors must file claims by May 22, 2025.**

How to File a Settlement Claim: DFI encourages Washington State residents who invested with GS Partners to file a claim at gsbsettlement.com.

A [list of required supporting documents](#) is available online, and all claims will be processed via a secure portal provided by a third-party administrator (AlixPartners).

Questions? Information regarding GS Partners is available in a [DFI Consumer Alert from Oct. 9, 2024](#). Contact DFI with additional questions by emailing investorcomplaints@dfi.wa.gov.



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OUTREACH & FINANCIAL EDUCATION

DFI TAKES PART IN NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

The Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) is pleased to partner with multiple federal, state, and nonprofit agencies on national fraud prevention and financial education awareness campaigns.

April is Financial Capability Month - a time when financial education partners throughout the country place an emphasis on providing timely, relevant financial education information to the members of their communities.

America Saves Week is April 7-11. DFI joins this [national awareness campaign](#) annually in an effort to promote the importance of savings for financial wellness. Paying down debt, increasing savings, preparing for emergencies and significant expenses like education, purchasing vehicles, buying a home, and planning for retirement are all part of the messaging.



In March, we followed the lead of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) with their interagency **“Dating or Defrauding?”** [social media awareness campaign](#). Cautioning Americans to be skeptical of any request from online acquaintances for cryptocurrency, gift cards, wire transfers, or other forms of payment were among the messages shared via social media.

Other warning signs of a potential [Romance Scam](#) include:

- A prolonged inability to meet in-person.
- Moving chats off social/dating platforms to encrypted messaging.
- Repeated suggestions for investments or requests for money.



“It feels like we see a new variation on financial scams aimed to rob people of their hard-earned money nearly every day,” DFI Director Charlie Clark said. “We use multiple methods to warn Washingtonians. We post consumer alerts online, share tips on social media, and we continue to update our fraud prevention website [dfi.wa.gov/10B](#). This campaign helps us amplify the message for people to be cautious, ask questions, and verify the answers they get.”

DFI’s Financial Education and Outreach team continues to conduct in-person and online workshops and presentations throughout the state. Simply fill out the [online form](#) to request a presentation! We’re here to help Washingtonians learn how to [Identify, Prevent, and Report](#) financial fraud.

DFI AGENCY ‘AT A GLANCE’ (as of Dec. 31, 2024)



DFI received **2,129**
consumer complaints
in 2024



DFI issued **155**
enforcement actions
in 2024



DFI issued **\$1.2 million**
in Cash Fines & Penalties
in Fiscal Year 2024

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WASHINGTON SAVES: HELPING MORE WASHINGTON WORKERS SAVE FOR TOMORROW

An estimated 1.8 million Washingtonians do not have a retirement plan at work. That makes it harder to build wealth and prepare for the future. Washington Saves is a new state program designed to help workers take steps toward a more secure retirement.



Beginning in 2027, a new Washington State law will require most employers without a qualified retirement plan to participate. The goal is to close the savings access gap and give all workers a chance to build financial security.

Washington Saves will provide employees a simple way to save. Workers will be automatically enrolled in their own Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and make contributions directly from their paycheck. They can opt out or change their contributions at any time. Accounts are portable and stay with workers when they change jobs.

Employers will only be responsible for a few simple tasks. The program has no fees for employers, and they aren't financially or legally responsible for it.



DOWNLOAD

WASHINGTON SAVES
SAVE TODAY.
THRIVE TOMORROW.

Washington Saves gives employees a new way to save for retirement, even when their employer may not offer a retirement plan.

Savings Made Simple: Washington Saves helps you build financial security through **automatic payroll deductions** into your own **Individual Retirement Account (IRA)**.

How Washington Saves Can Work For You!

- **Automatic Enrollment** If you're 18 and work for a participating employer you'll be auto enrolled, but can opt out (or back in) anytime.
- **Open to Everyone** Self-employed individuals, as well as those working at a non-mandated employer, can also join via individual enrollment.
- **It's Flexible, Portable and Easy to Manage** No hassle, no complicated paperwork, and choose from a simple menu of investment options.
- **Set Your Rate** You can choose how much to save from each paycheck, or use the default savings rate. Change it anytime.
- **Grow Your Savings** Your money, professionally managed.

Easy and Automatic
Tax advantaged savings directly from your paycheck

Your Money, Where Ever You Go
Your account follows you, even if you change jobs

Build Long-Term Wealth
Realize the advantages of financial gains over time

Beyond Social Security
Personal retirement savings provide added freedom

Coming Soon Washington Saves is expected to launch in 2027. Stay informed! Visit www.wasaves.com to learn more!

dfi | wasaves.dfi.wa.gov | www.wasaves.com | www.facebook.com/wasaves

How You Can Get Involved

As we build Washington Saves we're looking to partner with financial institutions, nonprofits, employer organizations, and community groups to spread the word and support outreach. If your work supports financial inclusion, community or economic development, or small business engagement - we'd love to connect.

Together, we can help more Washington residents save for a better future!

Want More Information?

Visit www.wasaves.com to sign-up for email updates.

Interested in Partnering?

Contact us at wasaves@dfi.wa.gov

In 2024, DFI provided more than **15,000 Washingtonians** with **financial education** via **166 outreach events and presentations!**



DID YOU KNOW? DFI provides free financial education presentations throughout the state - in both English and Spanish - to businesses, senior centers, community groups, schools and non-profits. Learn how we can help your neighbors by visiting: www.dfi.wa.gov/presentation-request

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