

AMAZON'S SAUCE MAN

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TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017

The Seattle Times

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After brief lull, Seattle and Eastside home prices climb to record highs

BIGGEST ONE-MONTH JUMP SINCE EARLY 2015

Competition is fierce with fewer homes on the market

By MIKE ROSENBERG
Seattle Times business reporter

Local home prices are surging back up again to record heights, signaling the end to the normal winter cool-down in the market.

King County's median single-family home price was \$560,000 in February, up 6.7 percent from January — the biggest one-month jump in home prices since early 2015, new data released Monday shows. The sharp increase comes after a recent trend of slowing home price growth that's common in colder months.

The biggest price increases hit the suburbs, but the city of Seattle saw a healthy bump, as well.

Seattle's median home sold for \$675,000 last month, beating an all-time high set last summer. Prices have now nearly doubled over the last five years.

The Eastside and Snohomish County also set new price records.

Prices are surging largely because there are fewer and fewer homes up for grabs, making competition fierce. The number of houses for sale in King County is at its lowest point since at least

Median single-family home prices

\$832K Eastside | **\$675K** Seattle | **\$560K** King County

2000, the furthest back records are available.

Michael Doyle, a managing broker for Windermere in Seattle, said he put a Ballard home on the See > HOME SALES, A10

GOP offers new bill to unravel health law

REPLACES OBAMACARE

It would repeal fines on uninsured, add age-based tax credits

By ZACHARY TRACER AND ANNA EDNEY
Bloomberg News

Republicans unveiled their long-awaited legislation to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), proposing to phase out key parts of the law over several years as they try to break through a stalemate between moderates and conservatives in their party.

Called the American Health Care Act, House Republicans' proposal includes a refundable, age-based tax credit to help people buy insurance. It also ends a requirement to have coverage, and would eventually eliminate many taxes used to fund the 2010 law. Other changes, like a wind-down of an expansion of Medicaid, are phased in over a period of years.

House committees planned to begin voting on the 123-page legislation Wednesday, launching what could be the year's defining battle in Congress and capping seven years of Republican vows to repeal the 2010 law. Solid Democratic opposition is a given.

It's not clear whether the proposal can win the support of House conservatives or clear the Senate — where Republicans possess a razor-thin margin and are relying on a fast-track legislation procedure full of limitations. There's also been little involvement from President Donald Trump, who has eschewed detailed policy proposals in favor of tweets and broad promises about better health care for less money.

Yet seven years after Republicans began promising repeal, the proposal is the most comprehensive look yet at how the GOP will approach replacing the health law, which brought coverage to an estimated 20 million people. Republicans have blamed the ACA for rising insurance premiums and high out-of-pocket costs, and criticized its requirement that everyone have health insurance or pay a penalty.

The proposal released Monday night represents an attempt to appease different factions within the party. While conservatives have pushed for full, immediate repeal, one concern among some moderates is that too-sudden changes would callously toss people out of coverage right away — particularly those in Medicaid, the federal-state program for the poor that was expanded under Obamacare.

"It looks like they've moved See > HEALTH CARE, A4

Trump's new travel ban still raises legal questions

BUT MORE LIKELY TO HOLD UP IN COURT, EXPERTS SAY

State AG touts earlier victory, undecided on new challenge

By JIM BRUNNER
Seattle Times political reporter

The immigration order signed Monday by President Donald Trump cured some legal flaws in his previous travel ban but could still prove vulnerable to court challenges, according to legal experts.

The narrower travel ban bars new visas for citizens from six Muslim-majority countries and temporarily shuts down the nation's refugee program, with the White House saying those moves are justified by national security.

Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat whose federal lawsuit halted enforcement of Trump's first travel-ban order, said he has concerns about the new version but doesn't know yet whether he'll challenge it.

"I do not take lightly suing the president of the United States," he said at a news conference Monday in Seattle. Some constitutional- and immigrant-law experts said changes in the latest travel-ban order make it more likely to withstand legal scrutiny.

"I think the president has made it a lot more difficult for courts to strike it down," said Won Kidane, a Seattle University law professor who teaches immigration law. "The previous executive order was just rushed and it didn't make sense ... Now I think they took their time and took care of many of the offending provisions."

Monday's order removed Iraq from See > TRAVEL BAN, A7



STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

"I do not take lightly suing the president of the United States," state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said during a Monday news conference. State Solicitor General Noel Purcell is at center right.

TAXES SMACK SEATTLE POOR AS TOP EARNERS GET OFF EASY

Gene Balk / FYI Guy
Seattle Times staff columnist

Seattleites have a reputation when it comes to taxes: We've never met one we didn't like.

There's some truth to it. My colleague Danny Westneat counted nine tax hikes — most of them voter-approved — in Mayor Ed Murray's first term.

So compared with other U.S. cities, you might think the residents of Seattle are horribly overtaxed.

But are we? Yes, you've got every right to complain,



according to a new study of tax burdens in American cities — but only if you're near the bottom of the economic ladder. Low earners in Seattle rank among the hardest-hit by taxes in the U.S.

Middle and upper earners here, on the other hand, enjoy one of the nation's most favorable tax burdens. Seattle is the only city to rank both among the best for the affluent and among the worst for the poor.

The study, released in December, was produced by the municipal government of Washington, D.C., where folks were wondering how their city's taxes stack up. So researchers gathered information about all state and local taxes for the largest city in every state. Including Washington, D.C., the report compares 51 cities.

Four categories of state and local taxes and

The tax burden for Seattle households

The tax burden for a low-income household in Seattle is significantly higher than for a middle- or high-income household:

TOTAL INCOME	\$25K FAMILY	\$75K FAMILY	\$150K FAMILY
TAXES AS % OF INCOME	15.5%	5.9%	5.1%
Property tax*	\$2,527	\$2,267	\$4,534
Sales tax	\$1,056	\$1,753	\$2,657
Auto/gas tax	\$296	\$375	\$525
Income tax	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL TAXES	\$3,879	\$4,395	\$7,716

*For the \$25K family, the figure used is the property-tax equivalent of rent, which is calculated as 20 percent of median rent in the metropolitan area.

Source: District of Columbia, Office of the Chief Financial Officer

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

fees were taken into account: income, property, sales and automobile.

The researchers localized the data for each city beyond merely the tax rates. For example, when figuring out property taxes, they used median home values in each metro area

See > FYI GUY, A9

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