ENGROSSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1105

AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

Passed Legislature - 2019 Regular Session

State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session

By House Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Orwall, Ryu, Wylie, Pollet, Stanford, and Frame)

READ FIRST TIME 02/22/19.

AN ACT Relating to protecting taxpayers from home foreclosure; 1 2 amending RCW 84.56.020, 84.64.225, 36.35.110, and 84.64.050; adding a 3 new section to chapter 84.56 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 4 36.29 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 36.21 RCW; and providing 5 an effective date.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 RCW 84.56.020 and 2017 c 142 s 1 are each amended to Sec. 1. read as follows: 8

9

Treasurers' tax collection duties.

10 (1) The county treasurer must be the receiver and collector of 11 all taxes extended upon the tax rolls of the county, whether levied for state, county, school, bridge, road, municipal or other purposes, 12 13 and also of all fines, forfeitures or penalties received by any 14 person or officer for the use of his or her county. No treasurer may 15 accept tax payments or issue receipts for the same until the 16 treasurer has completed the tax roll for the current year's 17 collection and provided notification of the completion of the roll. Notification may be accomplished electronically, by posting a notice 18 in the office, or through other written communication as determined 19 20 by the treasurer. All real and personal property taxes and 21 assessments made payable by the provisions of this title are due and payable to the county treasurer on or before the thirtieth day of April and, except as provided in this section, are delinquent after that date. <u>Tax statements.</u> (2) (a) Tax statements for the current year's collection must be distributed to each taxpayer on or before March 15th provided that:

7 (i) All city and other taxing district budgets have been 8 submitted to county legislative authorities by November 30th per RCW 9 84.52.020;

10 <u>(ii) The county legislative authority in turn has certified taxes</u> 11 <u>levied to the county assessor by November 30th per RCW 84.52.070; and</u>

12 <u>(iii) The county assessor has delivered the tax roll to the</u> 13 <u>county treasurer by January 15th per RCW 84.52.080.</u>

14 (b) Each tax statement must include a notice that checks for 15 payment of taxes may be made payable to "Treasurer of 16 County" or other appropriate office, but tax statements may not 17 include any suggestion that checks may be made payable to the name of 18 the individual holding the office of treasurer nor any other 19 individual.

20 (c) Each tax statement distributed to an address must include a 21 notice with information describing the:

22 (i) Property tax exemption program pursuant to RCW 84.36.379
23 through 84.36.389; and

24 (ii) Property tax deferral program pursuant to chapter 84.38 RCW.
 25 **Tax payment due dates.**

26 <u>On-time tax payments: First-half taxes paid by April 30th and</u>
27 <u>second-half taxes paid by October 31st.</u>

(3) When the total amount of tax or special assessments on personal property or on any lot, block or tract of real property payable by one person is fifty dollars or more, and if one-half of such tax is paid on or before the thirtieth day of April, the remainder of such tax is due and payable on or before the following thirty-first day of October and is delinquent after that date.

34 <u>Delinquent tax payments for current year: First-half taxes paid</u> 35 <u>after April 30th.</u>

36 (4) When the total amount of tax or special assessments on any 37 lot, block or tract of real property or on any mobile home payable by 38 one person is fifty dollars or more, and if one-half of such tax is 39 paid after the thirtieth day of April but before the thirty-first day 40 of October, together with the applicable interest and penalty on the 1 full amount of tax payable for that year, the remainder of such tax
2 is due and payable on or before the following thirty-first day of
3 October and is delinquent after that date.

4 <u>Delinquent tax payments: Interest, penalties, and treasurer</u> 5 duties.

6 (5) Except as provided in (c) of this subsection, delinquent 7 taxes under this section are subject to interest at the rate of twelve percent per annum computed on a monthly basis on the amount of 8 tax delinquent from the date of delinquency until paid. Interest must 9 be calculated at the rate in effect at the time of the tax payment, 10 11 regardless of when the taxes were first delinquent. In addition, 12 delinquent taxes under this section are subject to penalties as 13 follows:

(a) A penalty of three percent of the amount of tax delinquent is
assessed on the tax delinquent on June 1st of the year in which the
tax is due.

17 (b) An additional penalty of eight percent is assessed on the 18 delinquent tax amount on December 1st of the year in which the tax is 19 due.

20 (c) If a taxpayer is successfully participating in a payment 21 agreement under subsection $\left(\frac{12}{12}\right)$ (b) of this section or a 22 partial payment program pursuant to subsection $\left(\frac{(13)}{(15)(c)}\right)$ of 23 this section, the county treasurer may not assess additional penalties on delinquent taxes that are included within the payment 24 25 agreement. Interest and penalties that have been assessed prior to 26 the payment agreement remain due and payable as provided in the 27 payment agreement.

(6) <u>A county treasurer must provide notification to each taxpayer</u> whose taxes have become delinquent under subsections (4) and (5) of this section. The delinquency notice must specify where the taxpayer can obtain information regarding:

32 (a) Any current tax or special assessments due as of the date of 33 the notice;

34 (b) Any delinquent tax or special assessments due, including any
 35 penalties and interest, as of the date of the notice; and

36 (c) Where the taxpayer can pay his or her property taxes directly 37 and contact information, including but not limited to the phone 38 number, for the statewide foreclosure hotline recommended by the 39 Washington state housing finance commission.

1 <u>(7) Within ninety days after the expiration of two years from the</u> 2 date of delinquency (when a taxpayer's taxes have become delinquent), 3 the county treasurer must provide the name and property address of 4 the delinquent taxpayer to a homeownership resource center or any 5 other designated local or state entity recommended by the Washington 6 state housing finance commission.

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Collection of foreclosure costs.

8 (8)(a) When real property taxes become delinquent and prior to 9 the filing of the certificate of delinquency, the treasurer is 10 authorized to assess and collect tax foreclosure avoidance costs.

11 (b) ((For the purposes of this section, "tax foreclosure avoidance costs" means those direct costs associated with the administration of properties subject to and prior to foreclosure. Tax foreclosure avoidance costs include:

15 (i) Compensation of employees for the time devoted to 16 administering the avoidance of property foreclosure; and

17 (ii) The cost of materials, services, or equipment acquired, 18 consumed, or expended in administering tax foreclosure avoidance 19 prior to the filing of a certificate of delinquency.

20 (c)) When tax foreclosure avoidance costs are collected, such 21 costs must be credited to the county treasurer service fund account, 22 except as otherwise directed.

(((d))) <u>(c)</u> For purposes of chapter 84.64 RCW, any taxes, interest, or penalties deemed delinquent under this section remain delinquent until such time as all taxes, interest, and penalties for the tax year in which the taxes were first due and payable have been paid in full.

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(((7))) <u>Periods of armed conflict.</u>

29 (9) Subsection (5) of this section notwithstanding, no interest 30 or penalties may be assessed during any period of armed conflict 31 regarding delinquent taxes imposed on the personal residences owned 32 by active duty military personnel who are participating as part of 33 one of the branches of the military involved in the conflict and 34 assigned to a duty station outside the territorial boundaries of the 35 United States.

36 (((+8))) State of emergency.

37 <u>(10)</u> During a state of emergency declared under RCW 38 43.06.010(12), the county treasurer, on his or her own motion or at 39 the request of any taxpayer affected by the emergency, may grant

extensions of the due date of any taxes payable under this section as
 the treasurer deems proper.

3 (((9))) <u>Retention of funds from interest.</u>

4 <u>(11)</u> All collections of interest on delinquent taxes must be 5 credited to the county current expense fund.

6 (((10))) <u>(12)</u> For purposes of this chapter, "interest" means both 7 interest and penalties.

8

((((11))) <u>Retention of funds from property foreclosures and sales.</u>

(13) The direct cost of foreclosure and sale of real property, 9 and the direct fees and costs of distraint and sale of personal 10 11 property, for delinquent taxes, must, when collected, be credited to the operation and maintenance fund of the county treasurer 12 prosecuting the foreclosure or distraint or sale; and must be used by 13 the county treasurer as a revolving fund to defray the cost of 14 further foreclosure, distraint, and sale because of delinquent taxes 15 16 without regard to budget limitations and not subject to indirect 17 costs of other charges.

18 ((((12)(a))) <u>Tax due dates and options for tax payment</u> 19 <u>collections.</u>

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Electronic billings and payments.

(14) For purposes of this chapter, and in accordance with this 21 22 section and RCW 36.29.190, the treasurer may collect taxes, assessments, fees, rates, interest, and charges by electronic billing 23 and payment. Electronic billing and payment may be used as an option 24 25 by the taxpayer, but the treasurer may not require the use of 26 electronic billing and payment. Electronic bill presentment and payment may be on a monthly or other periodic basis as the treasurer 27 28 deems proper for:

- 29 (a) Delinquent tax year payments ((only or for)); and
- 30 (b) Prepayments of current tax.
- 31 **Tax payments.**
- 32

Prepayment for current taxes.

33 (15) (a) The treasurer may accept prepayments for current year 34 taxes by any means authorized. All prepayments must be paid in full 35 by the due date specified in ((c) of this)) subsection <u>(16) of this</u> 36 section. ((Payments on past due taxes must include collection of the 37 oldest delinquent year, which includes interest and taxes within a 38 twelve-month period, prior to filing a certificate of delinquency 39 under chapter 84.64 RCW or distraint pursuant to RCW 84.56.070.))

40 **Payment agreements for current year taxes.**

1 (b)(i) The treasurer may provide, by electronic means or 2 otherwise, a payment agreement that provides for payment of current 3 year taxes, inclusive of prepayment collection charges. <u>The payment</u> 4 <u>agreement must be signed by the taxpayer and treasurer or the</u> 5 <u>treasurer's deputy prior to the sending of an electronic or</u> 6 <u>alternative bill, which includes a payment plan for current year</u> 7 <u>taxes.</u>

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Payment agreements for delinquent year taxes.

The treasurer may provide, by electronic means 9 (ii)(A) or 10 otherwise, a payment agreement for payment of past due 11 delinquencies ((, which must also require current year taxes to be 12 paid timely)). The payment agreement must be signed by the taxpayer and treasurer or the treasurer's deputy prior to the sending of an 13 electronic or alternative bill, which includes a payment plan for 14 ((current year taxes. The treasurer may accept partial payment of 15 current and delinquent taxes including interest and penalties using 16 17 electronic bill presentment and payments.

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(c)) past due delinguent taxes and charges.

19 <u>(B) Tax payments received by a treasurer for delinquent year</u> 20 <u>taxes from a taxpayer participating on a payment agreement must be</u> 21 <u>applied first to the oldest delinquent year unless such taxpayer</u> 22 <u>requests otherwise.</u>

23 <u>Partial payments: Acceptance of partial payments for current and</u> 24 <u>delinquent taxes.</u>

25 (c) (i) In addition to the payment agreement program in (b) of 26 this subsection, the treasurer may accept partial payment of any 27 current and delinquent taxes including interest and penalties by any 28 means authorized including electronic bill presentment and payments.

29 (ii) All tax payments received by a treasurer for delinquent year 30 taxes from a taxpayer paying a partial payment must be applied first 31 to the oldest delinquent year unless such taxpayer requests 32 otherwise.

Payment for delinquent taxes.

34 <u>(d) Payments on past due taxes must include collection of the</u> 35 <u>oldest delinquent year, which includes interest, penalties, and taxes</u> 36 <u>within an eighteen-month period, prior to filing a certificate of</u> 37 <u>delinquency under chapter 84.64 RCW or distraint pursuant to RCW</u> 38 <u>84.56.070.</u>

39 Due date for tax payments.

1 (16) All taxes upon real and personal property made payable by 2 the provisions of this title are due and payable to the treasurer on 3 or before the thirtieth day of April and are delinquent after that 4 date. The remainder of the tax is due and payable on or before the 5 following thirty-first of October and is delinquent after that date. 6 All other assessments, fees, rates, and charges are delinquent after 7 the due date.

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(((d))) <u>Electronic funds transfers.</u>

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(17) A county treasurer may authorize payment of:

10(a) Any current property taxes due under this chapter by11electronic funds transfers on a monthly or other periodic basis; and

12 (b) Any past due property taxes, penalties, and interest under 13 this chapter by electronic funds transfers on a monthly <u>or other</u> 14 <u>periodic</u> basis. Delinquent taxes are subject to interest and 15 penalties, as provided in subsection (5) of this section. All tax 16 <u>payments received by a treasurer from a taxpayer paying delinquent</u> 17 <u>year taxes must be applied first to the oldest delinquent year unless</u> 18 <u>such taxpayer requests otherwise</u>.

19

(((-(-))) Payment for administering prepayment collections.

20 (18) The treasurer must pay any collection costs, investment 21 earnings, or both on past due payments or prepayments to the credit 22 of a county treasurer service fund account to be created and used 23 only for the payment of expenses incurred by the treasurer, without 24 limitation, in administering the system for collecting prepayments.

25 (((13) In addition to the payment program in subsection (12)(b) 26 of this section, the treasurer may accept partial payment of current 27 and delinquent taxes including interest and penalties by any means 28 authorized.

29 (14) For purposes of this section unless the context clearly 30 requires otherwise, the following definitions apply:))

31 <u>Waiver of interest and penalties for qualified taxpayers subject</u> 32 <u>to foreclosure.</u>

33 (19) No earlier than sixty days prior to the date that is three 34 years after the date of delinquency, the treasurer must waive all 35 outstanding interest and penalties on delinquent taxes due from a 36 taxpayer if the property is subject to an action for foreclosure 37 under chapter 84.64 RCW and the following requirements are met:

38 (a) The taxpayer is income-qualified under RCW 84.36.381(5)(a), 39 as verified by the county assessor;

1	(b) The taxpayer occupies the property as their principal place
2	of residence; and
3	(c) The taxpayer has not previously received a waiver on the
4	property as provided under this subsection.
5	Definitions.
6	(20) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
7	section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.
8	(a) "Electronic billing and payment" means statements, invoices,
9	or bills that are created, delivered, and paid using the internet.
10	The term includes an automatic electronic payment from a person's
11	checking account, debit account, or credit card.
12	(b) "Internet" has the same meaning as provided in RCW
13	19.270.010.
14	<u>(c) "Tax foreclosure avoidance costs" means those direct costs</u>
15	associated with the administration of properties subject to and prior
16	to foreclosure. Tax foreclosure avoidance costs include:
17	<u>(i) Compensation of employees for the time devoted to</u>
18	administering the avoidance of property foreclosure; and
19	(ii) The cost of materials, services, or equipment acquired,
20	consumed, or expended in administering tax foreclosure avoidance
21	prior to the filing of a certificate of delinquency.
22	Sec. 2. RCW 84.64.225 and 2015 c 95 s 11 are each amended to
23	read as follows:
24	(1) In lieu of the sale procedure specified in RCW 84.56.070 or
25	84.64.080, the county treasurer may conduct a public auction sale by
26	electronic media as provided in RCW 36.16.145.
27	(2) Notice of a public auction sale by electronic media must be
28	substantially in the following form:
29	TAX JUDGMENT SALE BY ELECTRONIC MEDIA
30	Public notice is hereby given that pursuant to a tax judgment of
31	the superior court of the county of in the state of
32	Washington, and an order of sale duly issued by the court, entered
33	the day of in proceedings for
34	foreclosure of tax liens, I shall on the day
35	of , , commencing at o'clock, at
36	[specify web site address] , sell the property to the
37	highest and best bidder to satisfy the full amount of taxes,
38	interest, and costs adjudged to be due. Prospective bidders must

deposit . . . to participate in bidding. A deposit paid by a 1 winning bidder will be applied to the balance due. However, a winning 2 bidder who does not comply with the terms of sale will forfeit the 3 deposit. Deposits paid by nonwinning bidders will be refunded within 4 ten business days of the close of the sale. Payment of deposits and a 5 6 winning bid must be made by electronic funds transfer. In the case of 7 an online public auction sale by electronic media as provided in RCW 36.16.145, a winning bidder is allowed no less than forty-eight hours 8 to pay the winning bid by electronic funds transfer. 9

In witness whereof, I have affixed my hand and seal this . . . 10 11 day of , 12

Treasurer of county.

13 Sec. 3. RCW 36.35.110 and 2013 c 221 s 2 are each amended to read as follows: 14

15 (1)No claims are allowed against the county from any municipality, school district, road district or other taxing district 16 17 for taxes levied on property acquired by the county by tax deed under the provisions of this chapter, but all taxes must at the time of 18 deeding the property be thereby canceled. However, the proceeds of 19 20 any sale of any property acquired by the county by tax deed must first be applied to reimburse the county for the costs of foreclosure 21 and sale. The remainder of the proceeds, if any, must be applied to 22 pay any amounts deferred under chapter 84.37 or 84.38 RCW on the 23 24 property, including accrued interest, and outstanding at the time the 25 county acquired the property by tax deed. The remainder of the proceeds, if any, must be justly apportioned to the various funds 26 27 existing at the date of the sale, in the territory in which such property is located, according to the tax levies of the year last in 28 process of collection. 29

30 (2) For purposes of this section, "costs of foreclosure and sale" means those costs of foreclosing on the property that, when 31 collected, are subject to RCW 84.56.020(((9))) (13), and the direct 32 costs incurred by the county in selling the property. 33

34 Sec. 4. RCW 84.64.050 and 2013 c 221 s 12 are each amended to read as follows: 35

(1) Except as provided in subsection (7) of this section, after 36 the expiration of three years from the date of delinquency, when any 37 property remains on the tax rolls for which no certificate of 38

delinquency has been issued, the county treasurer must proceed to issue certificates of delinquency on the property to the county for all years' taxes, interest, and costs. However, the county treasurer, with the consent of the county legislative authority, may elect to issue a certificate for fewer than all years' taxes, interest, and costs to a minimum of the taxes, interest, and costs for the earliest year.

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(2) Certificates of delinquency are prima facie evidence that:

9 (a) The property described was subject to taxation at the time 10 the same was assessed;

11

(b) The property was assessed as required by law;

12 (c) The taxes or assessments were not paid at any time before the 13 issuance of the certificate;

14 (d) Such certificate has the same force and effect as a lis 15 pendens required under chapter 4.28 RCW.

16 (3) The county treasurer may include in the certificate of 17 delinquency any assessments which are due on the property and are the 18 responsibility of the county treasurer to collect. However, if the 19 department of revenue has previously notified the county treasurer in writing that the property has a lien on it for deferred property 20 taxes, the county treasurer must include in the certificate of 21 22 delinquency any amounts deferred under chapters 84.37 and 84.38 RCW 23 that remain unpaid, including accrued interest and costs.

(4) The treasurer must file the certificates when completed with 24 25 the clerk of the court at no cost to the treasurer, and the treasurer 26 must thereupon, with legal assistance from the county prosecuting attorney, proceed to foreclose in the name of the county, the tax 27 28 liens embraced in such certificates. Notice and summons must be served or notice given in a manner reasonably calculated to inform 29 the owner or owners, and any person having a recorded interest in or 30 31 lien of record upon the property, of the foreclosure action to appear 32 within thirty days after service of such notice and defend such action or pay the amount due. Either (a) personal service upon the 33 owner or owners and any person having a recorded interest in or lien 34 of record upon the property, or (b) publication once in a newspaper 35 of general circulation, which is circulated in the area of the 36 property and mailing of notice by certified mail to the owner or 37 owners and any person having a recorded interest in or lien of record 38 39 upon the property, or, if a mailing address is unavailable, personal 40 service upon the occupant of the property, if any, is sufficient. If

such notice is returned as unclaimed, the treasurer must send notice 1 by regular first-class mail. The notice must include the legal 2 description on the tax rolls, the year or years for which assessed, 3 the amount of tax and interest due, and the name of owner, or reputed 4 owner, if known, and the notice must include the local street 5 6 address, if any, for informational purposes only. The certificates of 7 delinquency issued to the county may be issued in one general certificate in book form including all property, and the proceedings 8 to foreclose the liens against the property may be brought in one 9 action and all persons interested in any of the property involved in 10 11 the proceedings may be made codefendants in the action, and if 12 unknown may be therein named as unknown owners, and the publication such notice is sufficient service thereof on all persons 13 of interested in the property described therein, except as provided 14 above. The person or persons whose name or names appear on the 15 16 treasurer's rolls as the owner or owners of the property must be 17 considered and treated as the owner or owners of the property for the purpose of this section, and if upon the treasurer's rolls it appears 18 that the owner or owners of the property are unknown, then the 19 property must be proceeded against, as belonging to an unknown owner 20 21 or owners, as the case may be, and all persons owning or claiming to own, or having or claiming to have an interest therein, are hereby 22 required to take notice of the proceedings and of any and all steps 23 thereunder. However, prior to the sale of the property, the treasurer 24 25 must order or conduct a title search of the property to be sold to 26 determine the legal description of the property to be sold and the record title holder, and if the record title holder or holders differ 27 from the person or persons whose name or names appear on the 28 29 treasurer's rolls as the owner or owners, the record title holder or holders must be considered and treated as the owner or owners of the 30 31 property for the purpose of this section, and are entitled to the 32 notice provided for in this section. Such title search must be included in the costs of foreclosure. 33

(5) If the title search required by subsection (4) of this section reveals a lien in favor of the state for deferred taxes on the property under RCW 84.37.070 or 84.38.100 and such deferred taxes are not already included in the certificate of delinquency, the county treasurer must issue an amended certificate of delinquency on the property to include the outstanding amount of deferred taxes, including accrued interest. The amended certificate of delinquency

1 must be filed with the clerk of the court as provided in subsection
2 (4) of this section.

3 (6) The county treasurer may not sell property that is eligible 4 for deferral of taxes under chapter 84.38 RCW but must require the 5 owner of the property to file a declaration to defer taxes under 6 chapter 84.38 RCW.

7 <u>(7) Except those parcels where the local governing entity has</u> 8 <u>declared and/or certified the parcel a nuisance affecting public</u> 9 <u>peace, safety, and welfare, or other similar code provision, in no</u> 10 <u>case may a certificate of delinquency be filed on property where the</u> 11 <u>tax delinquency under chapter 84.56 RCW is one hundred dollars or</u> 12 <u>less in total excluding interest and penalties.</u>

13 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 84.56
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 (1) If a taxpayer requests assistance for payment of current year 16 or delinquent taxes, the county assessor, if applicable:

(a) May assist the taxpayer in applying for a property tax
 exemption program under RCW 84.36.379 through 84.36.389;

(b) May assist the taxpayer in applying for the property taxdeferral program under chapter 84.38 RCW; and

(c) Must refer the taxpayer to the statewide foreclosure hotline recommended by the Washington state housing finance commission.

(2) A county treasurer may also refer a taxpayer requesting tax
payment assistance to the county assessor's office under subsection
(1) of this section.

26 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 36.29 27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) The county treasurer must post a notice describing the:

(a) Property tax exemption program pursuant to RCW 84.36.379through 84.36.389; and

31 (b) Property tax deferral program pursuant to chapter 84.38 RCW.

32 (2) The notice required under subsection (1) of this section must33 be posted in a location visible to the public.

34 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> Sec. 7. A new section is added to chapter 36.21 35 RCW to read as follows:

36 (1) The county assessor must post a notice describing the:

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(a) Property tax exemption program pursuant to RCW 84.36.379
 through 84.36.389; and

3 (b) Property tax deferral program pursuant to chapter 84.38 RCW.

4 (2) The notice required under subsection (1) of this section must 5 be posted in a location visible to the public.

6 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> Sec. 8. This act takes effect January 1, 2020.

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