



# Legislative UPDATE

A weekly report from the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO



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## It's time to move it, move it

The first legislative cutoff date for 2007 has passed, and the next one is looming large.

Bills had to pass from policy committee by Wednesday to remain in play, but those that are still in fiscal or transportation committees have until this Monday, March 5 to advance. There are quite a few very important labor-supported bills in that category, so this edition of *WSLC Legislative Update* will describe those bills that need immediate action to survive past Monday.

(For status reports on other labor legislation, check out our Legislative Tracker™ at [www.wslc.org/legis/tracker07.htm](http://www.wslc.org/legis/tracker07.htm).)

Please call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 and urge your legislators to advance these bills by Monday!

**HB 2351** (prime sponsor: Rep. Sells) — **The new Aerospace Incentive Accountability Act** would prevent recipients of the \$3.2 billion in aerospace tax breaks approved in 2003 from forcing their employees to attend "captive audience" meetings to coerce employees to reject unionization. The unprecedented aerospace tax incentives approved in 2003 were intended to protect and create family-wage jobs at Boeing and its suppliers. But there is evidence that good Boeing jobs are being outsourced to low-wage low-benefit contractors that not only receive this public subsidy, but in some cases, have actively interfered with their employees' legal right to form a union. This bill's principle is simple: workers shouldn't have to choose between keeping their jobs and union representation. Every 17 minutes of every day, an American worker is illegally fired or penalized for supporting the formation of a union. Taxpayers should not be subsidizing such reprehensible behavior.

*HB 2351 needs to move from House Finance Committee.*

**HB 1827** (Rep. Santos) — This would require that the governor submit, along with her or his biennial budget proposal, a **tax expenditure report** listing all tax expenditures (exemptions) given out by the state and a recommendation on whether to continue those exemptions that are scheduled to sunset. This information is essential for legislators—and for taxpayers—to make informed decisions about what our state's budget priorities should be. For example, is it better to continue a particular targeted tax exemption or is it better to spend that money on health care? HB 1827 is about achieving true fiscal responsibility in Washington state.

*HB 1827 needs to move from House Finance Committee.*

### New poll: 3 of 4 Washington voters support Family Leave Insurance!

Three of four Washington voters support creating a worker-funded Family and Medical Leave Insurance program covering all workers in Washington state, according to a new poll released Thursday.

Fully 73% of voters statewide support the legislation now moving through the legislature. In Eastern Washington, the support was a remarkable 82%. (See poll details at [www.wslc.org](http://www.wslc.org).)

HB 1658 and SB 5659 would establish Family and Medical Leave Insurance of up to five weeks of paid leave, after a one-week waiting period, at a stipend of \$250 a week so workers can deal with a serious illness for themselves or a family member, including domestic partners, or the birth or adoption of a child. The insurance program would be financed by a 2-cents-an-hour payroll tax on workers, or \$40 a year.

The bills' supporters were buoyed by the poll results and say they think 2007 could finally be the year that the Legislature finally acts on this long-considered idea.

"Everywhere you turn, you hear workers say I just don't have the time (to take off work for emergencies)," said Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson (D-Seattle), prime sponsor of the House legislation. "Well, now is the time."

Both bills passed their policy committees, but remain in fiscal committees. **Call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000** and leave a message for your Senator and Representatives to SUPPORT HB 1658 and SB 5659 and to move them to the floor for a vote!

**HB 2094** (Rep. Conway) — The **Taxpayer Health Care Fairness Act**, like last year's Fair Share Health Care bill, would discourage employer "cost-shifting" onto taxpayers. HB 2094

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requires large employers—those with more than 1,000 employees—to reimburse the state for the costs of their workers who receive taxpayer-funded health benefits. Some workers, including those with disabilities who receive Social Security assistance are excluded from this requirement.

As Craig Cole, CEO of the Bellingham-based Brown & Cole Stores Inc., pointed out in a wonderful guest column this week in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: "There is no question that Brown & Cole (which has now filed for bankruptcy) was undermined by large profitable employers who have abandoned basic American values and pay their employees so badly their workers qualify for public assistance. Using state-funded health care is their profit strategy. They simply dump their health care costs onto taxpayers... Until universal health care with appropriate cost controls is in place, irresponsible employers shouldn't get off the hook."

*HB 2094 needs to move from House Appropriations.*

**HB 1658 and**

**SB 5659** (Rep. Dickerson and Sen. Keiser) — **Family and Medical Leave Insurance**

granting up to five weeks of paid leave, at a stipend of \$250 a week so workers can deal with a serious illness for themselves or a family member, including domestic partners, or the birth or adoption of a child. The insurance program would be financed by a 2-cents-an-hour payroll tax on workers, or \$40 a year. As the poll results indicate (see story on Page 1), after six years of debate and inaction, Washington's working families want legislators to act on this important issue.

*HB 1658 needs to move from House Appropriations.  
SB 5659 needs to move from Senate Ways and Means.*

**HB 1503**

(Rep. Conway) — This legislation deals with a long-term problem: employer use of Independent Medical Exams to bypass the expertise of attending physicians or other qualified physicians. HB 1503 would **restructure the Independent Medical Examination system** allowing attending physicians to make referrals before sending an injured worker to an IME, stipulating qualifications for doctors serving on IMEs, and providing adequate response time for attending physicians to comment on IME results.

*HB 1503 needs to move from House Appropriations.*

**HB 2106**

(Rep. Kenney) — A bill to strengthen the ability of the Department of Labor and Industries to **deny licenses to contractors with a record of serious legal violations**, prohibit exorbitant recruitment fees, and require sufficient bonding so that workers are not stranded in Washington state. Given the direction of the immigration debate in Congress around guest-

worker programs and what happened with Global Horizons in our state -- plus yesterday's *New York Times* report about guest workers stranded in North Carolina -- this bill is needed to protect both farm workers and honest growers from the activities of unscrupulous farm labor contractors.

*HB 2106 needs to move from House Appropriations.*

**HB 1810**

(Rep. Hudgins) — This bill creates a pilot project to **measure pesticide drift data** for use in assessing the potential human health impacts from such exposure to children and adults in schools and communities in agricultural areas. Data obtained would help in the creation of effective policy and programs for the safer application of pesticides, and to inform the public in agricultural areas of the health risks associated with the air that they breath.

*HB 1810 needs to move from House Appropriations.*

**HB 2086 and SB 5926**

(Rep. Conway and Sen. Kohl-Welles) — A measure to create a task force to **study the impact of the underground economy** in the construction industry in Washington state. The task force will investigate the impact of this illegal part of the economy on workers' health and safety and employment standards as well as tax evasion from state obligations.

*HB 2086 needs to move from House Appropriations.  
SB 5926 needs to move from Senate Ways & Means.*

**HB 1306**

(Rep. Green) — This would add Western and Eastern State Hospitals, as well as other health care entities, to the law **protecting registered and licensed nurses from mandatory overtime**. Essentially, this extends the labor standard prohibiting mandatory overtime—which is essential for both public safety and for recruitment and retention of nurses—from the public sector to the private sector.

*HB 1306 needs to move from House Appropriations.*

**SB 5223**

(Sen. Keiser) — A bill to require any disability insurance, health care service contract, or health maintenance agreement that provides coverage for dependent children to extend that **coverage to unmarried dependent children up to the age of 25**. This is necessary because nearly 30 percent of the uninsured population in Washington state are young adults between the ages of 19 and 25. This is the fastest growing segment of the uninsured.

*SB 5223 needs to move from Senate Ways and Means.*

Check out the **WSLC Legislative Tracker™** for up-to-the-second-we-get-to-it updates on the status of key labor bills. Visit **[www.wslc.org](http://www.wslc.org)**