



WSLC

Legislative Update

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



Post-cutoff status report on labor bills

Thursday, March 12 was the last day for bills to get floor votes in their houses of origin. Following is a progress report on some of the bills of concern to organized labor that were affected by Thursday's cutoff.

This is not a comprehensive list; reports from unions affiliated with the Washington State Labor Council continue to trickle in following yesterday's cutoff.

Legislation SUPPORTED by Labor

■ SB 5446 and HB 1528, the **Worker Privacy Act**, would have allowed workers in Washington state to choose whether or not to participate in employer communication on issues of individual conscience, including politics, religion, unionization, and charitable giving. It was opposed by Boeing, the Association of Washington Business and several other corporate lobbying groups. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

The following statement was issued Wednesday by Rick Bender, President of the Washington State Labor Council:

The Washington State Labor Council proudly stands behind our efforts to pass the Worker Privacy Act. Early Tuesday morning, an email communication related to the Privacy Act was inadvertently delivered to the offices of several Washington State legislators. We regret that this unintentional communication has stalled consideration of this important legislation.

■ SB 5046 and HB 1276, **collective bargaining for performance artists**, would have expanded the Public Employment Relations Commission's jurisdiction to include symphony orchestras, operas and performing arts theaters, thus granting collective bargaining rights to employees at all such venues. The Association of Washington Business testified that it had "concerns" about the bill. HB 1276 sat on the House floor calendar, available for a vote, from Feb. 26 until yesterday. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ HB 1992, **paying prevailing wages on public-private partnerships**, which would have solved the problem of contractors paying substandard wages on jobs that are subsidized, but not directly financed, by state or local governments. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ SB 5969, **reinforcing contractor "bid-shopping" laws** by revising how subcontractors are listed on public works projects. It was opposed by the Associated General Contractors and other industry lobbying groups. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ SB 5563, regarding **hours for health care employees**, would have closed a loophole in the ban on mandatory overtime for health care workers whereby nurses and other health care workers have been subjected to mandatory standby or "on-call" time. It was opposed by the state's hospital lobbying group. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ SB 5538, creating a plan for **converting part-time to full-time faculty positions** at the community and technical colleges. This would improve quality of education by increasing student access to instructors and finally begin to shift away from the negative trend of colleges relying more and more on part-time instructors. It was opposed by representatives of the administration at certain community and technical colleges. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ HB 1340 and SB 5259, modifying collective bargaining law to authorize providing **additional compensation to academic employees** at community and technical colleges. It was opposed by representatives of the administration at certain community and technical colleges. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

■ SB 5264 and HB 1423, providing salary increments for faculty at two-year colleges in the state budget, based on years of service and additional education and professional development. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE.**

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■ HB 1941, requiring that the boards of community and technical colleges have at least one labor member. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE** (or a hearing).

■ SB 5757, requiring the **appointment of non-voting labor members on transit boards**. This measure, similar to ones passed in other states like New York and Pennsylvania, would have created a way for transit employees to make suggestions -- without fear of reprisal -- to try to improve transit service. It was opposed by a transit agency lobbying group. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE**.

■ HB 1814 would have modified the Farm Labor Contractor Act to protect farm workers from unscrupulous labor contractors. It was opposed by agricultural industry lobbying groups. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE**.

■ SB 5672, regarding **source-of-income discrimination for housing**, would have protected people who receive rental housing subsidies and other legal sources of income from discrimination by landlords. It was opposed by lobbying groups representing landlords. **IT DIED WITHOUT A VOTE**.

Legislation **OPPOSED** by Labor

■ SB 5963, a **permanent tax cut for employers** on Unemployment Insurance, is opposed by organized labor because it grants hundreds of millions of dollars in permanent tax breaks to businesses with little or no benefit to workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own.

The WSLC has called for lawmakers to create a measure of balance in the bill by restoring the benefit multiplier to its pre-2005 level of 4.0 (an \$8- to \$19-a-week benefit increase to be phased in after the temporary stimulus benefit increase expires) and to retain the state's court-awarded discretion in determining "good-cause" quits. At the WSLC's Legislative Conference two weeks ago, Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown (D-Spokane) acknowledged, "We know the bill needs more work." But without amending SB 5963 to address labor's concerns... **IT PASSED THE SENATE, 31-12**.

(The WSLC thanks the following State Senators for their principled vote against SB 5963: Sens. Darlene Fairley, Rosa Franklin, Karen Fraser, Claudia Kauffman, Karen Keiser, Adam Kline, Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Joe McDermott, Eric Oemig, Craig Pridemore, and Kevin Ranker.)

■ SB 5943 to **privatize all child-welfare services**. This mandates that DSHS stop filling vacancies for these state jobs and begin contracting out immediately, regardless of where those vacancies are or whether or not there is a qualified contrac-

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tor. As with all privatization efforts, the stated goal is to save money by replacing middle-wage state jobs with lower-wage private contractor jobs. But there are reams of evidence that such privatization efforts actually increase costs and do not produce better outcomes. The case has not been made that the private sector can better protect vulnerable children than public employees can. **IT PASSED THE SENATE, 33-15**.

■ SB 5734 **deregulates tuition setting authority by giving control to the colleges and universities**. It removes accountability from the legislature and will ultimately lead to higher tuition costs. Opposed by students and the union representing university academic student employees, this bill was supported by the universities and the Washington Roundtable business group. **IT PASSED THE SENATE, 44-0**.

■ 2SSB 5491, "developing a strategy to reduce the cost of providing health benefits for K-12 employees." This bill would **force school districts to purchase health insurance coverage through the state** health care authority and currently schools are able to shop around for their employee plans. **IT PASSED THE SENATE, 47-1**.

■ SB 5288 **eliminates or reduces supervision of medium- and low-level sex offenders** in our communities. The bill reducing the categories of offenders supervised by Community Corrections officers, and attempts to save money by eliminating those jobs. **IT PASSED THE SENATE, 38-8**.

Legislative Town Hall meetings this weekend!

State Representatives and Senators in almost every legislative district are holding Town Hall meetings in their districts tomorrow (Saturday).

All union members are urged to attend and ask their elected official about the above-mentioned legislation and other issues of concern to Washington's working families.

For a list of Town Hall meetings, visit www.wslc.org.