



WSLC Legislative Update

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



Washington needs bold action on jobs!

Everyone has talked the talk on job creation. With just one week to go in the session, it's time to walk the walk.

The Washington State Labor Council—along with the Environmental Priorities Coalition, the Association of Washington Cities, and a broad coalition of education, health care, and social services groups—are all urging legislators to pass a strong version of HB 3181/SB 6851, the Working for Clean Water legislation. It will:

- Create thousands of construction jobs around the state. Stormwater infrastructure is construction-trades intensive and local by nature.
- Take action to address our state's biggest water pollution problem, millions of gallons of toxic stormwater wash directly into our lakes, rivers, and Puget Sound each year.

HB 3181/SB 6851 extends the tax on hazardous substances to clean up toxic pollution, which voters approved in 1987, to also cover stormwater pollution cleanup. This will raise hundreds of millions of dollars over the next five years for labor-intensive local construction projects in every corner of the state. Jobs retrofitting urban streets, digging storm ponds to collect polluted water, and building better storm drains.

The good news: With a new agreement to exempt exported petroleum from the tax, the United Steelworkers union is no longer opposing this legislation. The USW had expressed concerns that the original bill would jeopardize refinery jobs.

The bad news: HB 3181 passed out of the House Finance Committee on Monday with an amendment that significantly lowers the funding. The original bill included \$70 million in the first year, ramping up to more than \$225 million a year after 2015. The amended version proposes just \$10 million in the first year, gradually increasing to \$45 million a year.

The latest: Legislators are negotiating a new, compromise proposal that significantly funds stormwater infrastructure.

Bottom line: The time for talking about jobs is over. We need action—bold action—and we need it now.

The Washington State Labor Council urges state legislators to stand up to oil industry opposition and do what's right for the people of Washington by creating jobs and cleaning up our polluted waterways.

HB 3181/SB 6851 does both. Let's pass it!

Blood is still in the water at the State Printer

Another critical aspect of the Washington State Labor Council's "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs" legislative agenda this year has been to oppose the elimination of public-sector jobs, which would also have a negative economic impact on private sector jobs in communities across the state.

As we warned in "There's Blood in the Water," our first newsletter of the session, privatization advocates are exploiting the budget crisis as an opportunity to privatize services in ways our state has previously studied and rejected time and again. Their efforts to "reduce the footprint of government" are driven by private-is-good, public-is-bad ideology that was once confined to the Republican Party, but has now infected some Democrats in positions of power in Olympia.

The WSLC testified Wednesday in Senate Ways and Means against SB 6867 to eliminate the State Printer—and more than 100 family-wage jobs. What's most upsetting about this continuing effort is that a fair alternative is available. HB 2969, sponsored by Rep. Zack Hudgins (D-Tukwila), would maintain these jobs by merging the State Printer into the Department of Information Services, saving about \$6 million.

Let's save money and protect jobs. Not do harm to state employees, their families and our economy just so we can tell some teabagger that we cut "Big Guv-mint." (Psst... *they aren't going to vote for you anyway.*)

Protect public safety, pass "Safe Breaks" bill

You don't need a "study" to know that working long hours without a break makes you tired, and that when you're tired you make more mistakes. For many jobs—like writing newsletters—mistakes happen and it's no big deal.

But when a fatigue-related mistake at work can seriously injure or kill the people around you, our government has a responsibility to protect public safety through regulation. That's why there are laws requiring pilots and truck drivers

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to take regular breaks and meal periods. The same is needed for nurses and other health care workers.

You want studies? We got studies. Studies estimate that more than 98,000 people in the U.S. may die each year from errors in the health care system, making it the fifth leading cause of death. A 2004 study of hospital staff nurses found the odds of making an error were three times as great when the shift was longer than 12.5 hours than when it was 8.5 hours or less.

That's why HB 3024 is necessary. This "Safe Breaks" bill requires hospitals to provide nurses and other critical health care workers with uninterrupted meal and rest breaks. It provides flexibility, and won't require anyone to leave their patients or to abandon an emergency where specific skills or expertise are needed. HB 3024 passed the House on a bipartisan 63-24 vote. It is supported by a coalition of advocates for health care workers and patient safety, including the Washington State Nurses Association, SEIU 1199NW, UFCW 21 and the United Staff Workers Union/UFCW 141.

The Washington State Labor Council joins these organizations in calling for a House vote on HB 3024.

More labor-supported bills that need a vote

Friday (tomorrow) at 5 p.m. is the deadline for bills to pass the opposite house. In addition to the aforementioned HB 3024 to provide uninterrupted meal and rest breaks for hospital employees, the following WSLC-supported bills await a floor vote. Please give them one last push at the finish line by calling the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 and urging your Senator and Representatives to support them.

(Of course, by the time you read this, some of these bills may have been voted upon. Check the WSLC Legislative Tracker at www.wslc.org for updates.)

NEED A SENATE FLOOR VOTE

HB 2444—Providing leave from employment for participating in a child's educational activities. Passed House 54-40.

HB 2546—Revising classroom requirements for electrical trainees. Passed House 58-37.

NEED A HOUSE FLOOR VOTE

SB 6575—Addressing the recommendations of the joint task force on the underground economy. Passed Senate 34-13.

SB 6726—Collective bargaining rights for interpreters. Passed Senate 29-19.

SB 6815—Requires bargaining for ferry workers' health benefits as part of the coalition of other state employees, and not bargained separately. Passed Senate 46-0.

Labor-supported bills that GOT a vote

Following are some of the bills supported by the Washington State Labor Council that received floor action this week. Check the WSLC Legislative Tracker for links to the roll-call votes to see how your legislators voted.

SB 5046—Placing symphony musicians under the jurisdiction of the public employment relations commission for purposes of collective bargaining. It passed the House, 60-36, on Sunday after passing the Senate, 30-17.

HB 1560—Higher education collective bargaining legislation allowing employees of four-year institutions to engage in multi-employer bargaining. It passed the Senate, 33-15, on Wednesday. It had already passed the House, 64-33.

HB 2805—Requiring contractors that produce certain pre-fabricated items for large public-works contracts to submit payroll records and other information. It passed the Senate, 28-18, on Wednesday. It has passed the House, 54-43.

HB 2986—Requiring the appointment of nonvoting labor members on public transportation governing bodies. It passed the Senate, 28-19, on Wednesday. The House passed it, 66-29.

Did a shady deal kill child care bargaining?

As the WSLC reported online this week, at a videotaped public hearing on Saturday, Sen. Cheryl Pflug (R-Maple Valley) said that she and others negotiated an agreement with funders for a public-private partnership on early childhood education that "we would not unionize child care centers."

"Not doing this bill was the bright-line promise that we made to the Paul Allen Foundation, The Boeing Company and the McCaw family that contributed the funding for this," Sen. Pflug said. "We might want to remember that when we make a commitment to somebody that gives us \$70 million, we might want to keep it."

Sure enough, the bill Sen. Pflug was speaking against, HB 1329 to grant child care workers collective bargaining rights, died without a vote in that committee. For the second straight year, it passed the House but died in the Senate.

When contacted by a reporter, she did some backpedaling and said the WSLC misinterpreted her comments.

"Nobody committed to kill a bill," Pflug said. Legislators merely assured leaders of private funders that their money would not be diverted for some other purpose, she said.

With all due respect to Sen. Pflug, there is nothing to misinterpret. She said a "promise" was made "that we would not unionize child care centers." That speaks for itself.

Either Pflug was deliberately misrepresenting this agreement with private funders in order to convince her colleagues to kill HB 1329, or in a rare bout of candor, she admitted that legislators secured \$70 million by agreeing to block all legislative attempts to allow child care workers the right to bargain collectively. Well, which was it?