



# SESSION WATCH

Monday, March 5, 2018 (day 57 of the 60-day session)

### The Countdown is on

The countdown to the end has begun. The legislative session officially ends no later than midnight on Thursday, March 8. Several bills of note died in last week’s cutoff.

### Carbon Tax Bill Dies

Most notably, the carbon tax bill died. Immediately upon it’s death, a coalition of tribal, labor and environmental groups filed a petition for a citizen’s initiative to create a carbon fee. The fee would add an estimated 14 cents to the cost of a gallon of gasoline. The groups supporting the initiative have until July 6 to gather 260,000 signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot.

### Capital Gains Tax Dead as Well

The capital gains tax also appears to be dead. Leadership in the House has not brought it to the floor for a vote and leadership in the Senate has said they do not have the votes for a new tax.

### Fair Funding Good and Bad

On a more personal note, the bill that would have allowed the Fair Fund to increase for the first time in 20 years died. On the bright side, the bill updating the law that governs the Fair Fund passed and is headed to the Governor for signature.

### Suicide Bill Passes

Rep. JT Wilcox’s bill that creates a pilot program for suicide prevention efforts for the agricultural industry passed. Among other things, it will identify factors unique to the agricultural industry that affect the behavioral health of persons working in the industry.

### Bills Currently in Limbo

Bills dealing with automatic voter registration and rural access to broadband remain in limbo. Both bills were amended in the Senate. The House refused to concur with the Senate amendments, so now the Senate must agree to remove their amendments, or the bills die.

### Local Elections Bill Passes

SB 6002 dealing with local elections, did pass. Dubbed, the “Voting Rights Act,” the bill prohibits a local election system from impairing the ability of members of a protected class to have an equal opportunity to elect their preferred candidate. A protected class includes voters who are members of a race, color, or language minority group. The Act applies to elections held within counties, cities, towns, school districts, public utility districts, etc. It does not apply to state elections, or elections in a city or town with a population under 1,000 people.

As usual, the budget will be one of the last items to be resolved. A conference committee has been appointed. Expect to hear the results soon.

## Selected Bills of Interest

### High Priority Bills

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
<a href="#">SB 6368</a> Fairs, youth shows, & expos	H Passed 3rd	Warnick	Support

Updating laws concerning agricultural fairs, youth shows, and exhibitions. Modifies provisions regarding agricultural fairs, youth shows, and exhibitions on the following: (1) The state fair fund; (2) Categories of agricultural fairs that may be eligible for state allocations; (3) Eligibility requirements for those allocations; (4) Reimbursements for incurred operating expenses; and (5) Terms of the members of the fairs commission.

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<a href="#"><b>E2SSB 6386</b></a>	<b>DEAD - Ag. fair funding/sales taxes</b>	H 2nd Reading	Warnick	Support
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Requires the money received as the result of the imposition of the state retail sales tax on sales occurring during events held at county fairgrounds or grounds for fairs operated by a nonprofit where agricultural fairs occur, to be deposited into the fair fund. Requires the department of revenue to notify the state treasurer when the money collected and deposited for a fiscal year is 2.5 million dollars. Requires any money collected in excess of 2.5 million dollars for the fiscal year to be deposited in the general fund.

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<a href="#"><b>E2SSB 6529</b></a>	<b>Pesticide application safety</b>	H Passed 3rd	Saldaña	Oppose
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Creates the pesticide application safety work group to develop recommendations for improving the safety of pesticide applications. Expires December 31, 2018.

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### Medium Priority Bills

<u>Bill Details</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Position</u>
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<a href="#"><b>E2SHB 2177</b></a>	<b>Rural county jobs program</b>	S Passed 3rd	Chapman	Support
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Creates the rural county high employer demand jobs program to: (1) Meet the workforce needs of business and industry in rural counties by assisting students in earning certificates, associate degrees, or other industry-recognized credentials necessary for employment in high employer demand fields; and (2) Provide selected students scholarship funds, as determined by the opportunity scholarship board, to help them meet their eligible expenses for up to one year, when they enroll in a community or technical college program that prepares them for a high employer demand field. Requires the opportunity scholarship board to create the rural jobs program account, from which scholarship funds will be disbursed beginning no later than the fall term of the 2020 academic year, if by that date, state matching funds have been received. Creates the rural jobs program match transfer account.

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<a href="#"><b>E2SHB 2595</b></a>	<b>Automatic voter registration</b>	H ref/S recede	Hudgins	Oppose
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Establishes the automatic voter registration act of 2018. Requires the department of licensing to implement an automatic voter registration system so a person who is eligible to vote and is applying for or renewing an enhanced driver's license or identicaid may register to vote or update voter registration at the time of registration or renewal, by an automated process. Prohibits, unless required by law, the department of licensing from: (1) Sharing information used to verify identity with a federal agency or contractual obligation existing as of July 1, 2019; and (2) Collecting records or documentation used to certify eligibility to vote once the certification process has been completed and recorded. Requires the state health benefit exchange to: (1) Provide directly to the secretary of state's office information required to register to vote or transfer a registration for certain consenting persons; and (2) Study the feasibility of implementing automatic voter registration. Requires the office of the secretary of state to conduct a study and prepare recommendations for creating: (1) An automatic voter registration process for residents who recently completed the naturalization process; and (2) For an automatic pending voter registration process at birth. Exempts the following from public inspection and copying under the public records act: Information maintained in the pending voter registration database. Provides that sections 201 and 202 of this act are null and void if appropriations are not approved.

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<a href="#"><b>SHB 2664</b></a>	<b>Telecomm. authority/ports</b>	H ref/S recede	Dye	Support
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Extends, to all ports in the state, the existing telecommunications authority in order to facilitate public-private partnerships in wholesale telecommunications services and infrastructure.

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**Ag industry behavioral hlth**

S Passed 3rd

Wilcox

Support

Improving the behavioral health of people in the agricultural industry. Requires the department of health to: (1) Establish a pilot program to support behavioral health improvement and suicide prevention efforts for members of the agricultural industry workforce; (2) Contract with an entity that has behavioral health and suicide prevention expertise to develop a free resource for workers in the agricultural industry; and (3) Use an entity that has an existing telephonic and web-based resource, including entities that have prepared similar resources for other states. Requires the state office of rural health to convene a task force on behavioral health and suicide prevention in the agricultural industry and requires the task force to review the following issues: (1) Data related to the behavioral health status of persons associated with the agricultural industry, including suicide rates, substance use rates, and availability and use of behavioral health services; (2) Factors unique to the agricultural industry that affect the behavioral health of persons working in the industry; (3) Components that should be addressed in the pilot program, including consideration of components that relate to similar programs funded or partially funded by the federal office of rural health policy; and (4) Options to improve the behavioral health status of and reduce suicide risk among agricultural workers and their families, including individual focused and community focused strategies.

[2SHB 2671](#)**DEAD - Capital gains tax/prop. tax**

H Rules R

Lytton

Oppose

Assisting Washington families by improving the fairness of the state's tax system by enacting a capital gains tax and providing property tax relief.

[SHB 2967](#)

Declares an intent to: (1) Ask the state's citizens to reduce the state property tax levy and impose a commensurate new tax; (2) Impose a capital gains tax to improve the fairness of the state's tax system; and (3) Provide property tax relief to senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

**Voting rights act**

H Passed 3rd

Saldana

Concerns

Establishes the Washington voting rights act of 2018 to promote equal voting opportunity in certain political subdivisions and establish a cause of action to redress lack of voter opportunity.

[ESSB 6002](#)**Planting and harvest dates**

H Passed 3rd

Hobbs

Support

States that the planting and harvesting seasons are January 1st through December 31st of each year, with regard to the exemption for agricultural transporters.

[SB 6180](#)**Low Priority Bills****Bill Details****Status****Sponsor****Position****Seed certification fee use**

S Pres Signed

Warnick

Support

[SB 6278](#)

Revises the Washington state seed act to authorize the fees, that are collected for the certification of seed, to be used for services involving breeder seed, foundation seed, registered seed, and certified seed.

**Intrastate food safety**

H Passed 3rd

Takko

Support

[SSB 6318](#)

Clarifying existing law by creating a new intrastate food safety and security chapter from existing intrastate food safety laws and moving certain provisions in the intrastate commerce food, drugs, and cosmetics act to the titles of the agencies that administer the provisions. Establishes the food safety and security act. Protects the public from adulteration, misbranding, and false advertisement of food in intrastate commerce; and promotes uniformity with federal law, governmental transparency, and regulatory fairness. Clarifies existing law by creating a new intrastate food safety and security chapter from existing intrastate food safety laws and moving certain provisions in the intrastate commerce in food, drugs, and cosmetics act to the titles of the agencies that administer the provisions.

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**Other Bills****Bill Details****Status****Sponsor****Position**

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**Broadband & telecomm service**

H APPDPA

Sheldon

Support

**E2SSB 5935**

Creates the governor's office on broadband access within the department of commerce, and with the mission of improving economic vitality, health care access, and education through greater access to broadband services. Requires the office to: (1) In collaboration with the utilities and transportation commission, the office of the chief information officer, and the community economic revitalization board, serve as the coordinating body for public and private efforts to ensure statewide broadband access and deployment; (2) Be responsible for all matters regarding the adoption of statewide broadband access and deployment; (3) Establish a competitive grant program to assist qualified local governments and tribes to build infrastructure for open access, high speed broadband services; (4) Study taxes imposed on the capital costs associated with providing retail broadband service, including sales and use taxes; (5) Develop a small cell facility deployment permitting model ordinance for cities and towns; and (6) Consult with cities, counties, and service providers when developing the model ordinance. Authorizes the office to convene an advisory group to: (1) Make recommendations on developing a statewide rural broadband strategy to ensure broadband access statewide by January 1, 2026; and (2) Conduct a gap analysis on the deployment of broadband services in underserved and unserved areas of the state. Creates the broadband access account and requires expenditures from the account to only be used for the expansion of broadband access.

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**Federal produce safety rule**

S Pres Signed

Honeyford

**SB 6319  
(HB 2681)**

Establishes the produce safety rule implementation act to assist state produce farmers in implementation of the produce safety rule adopted by the United States food and drug administration pursuant to the federal food, drug, and cosmetic act. Authorizes the department of agriculture to: (1) Take actions necessary to cooperate in implementation of the produce safety rule, including entering into cooperative agreements with the United States food and drug administration, conducting compliance verification activities, enforcing regulatory compliance, and accepting federal funding to carry out the activities; (2) Cooperate with the United States food and drug administration in implementation of the produce safety rule only to the extent that the department receives federal funding for the activities; and (3) Establish a voluntary program for farms exempt or partially exempt from the produce safety rule to verify that the farms comply with the rule. Exempts the following from disclosure under the public records act: Information obtained from the federal government or others under contract with the federal government or records obtained by the department of agriculture. Creates a produce safety account in the agricultural local fund.

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