



WASHINGTON FARM BUREAU
www.wsfb.com

LegisLetter

PO Box 8690, Lacey, WA 98509 • 1.360.357.9975 • 1.800.331.3276

Activities of the Legislature affecting farmers and ranchers in Washington state

January 22, 2010

In this issue:

- House and Senate Hear Slate of Water Bills
- New Fees for Hydraulic Projects
- Bipartisan Eminent Domain Reform Stalled Without Hearings
- Hearings Monday on Ruckelshaus Extensions
- Agricultural Impact Statement Bills Heard in Senate
- Grassroots Pressure Needed for Workers' Comp Reform – Bipartisan Bill Needs Hearing
- Human Trafficking and Disclosure
- Unemployment Insurance
- Last Chance to Register! WFB Campaign Management Training Seminar in Lacey Feb. 2-3, in Spokane Feb. 4-5, 2010
- Register Online! WFB Legislative Days Feb. 9-10, 2010
- Washington Farm Bureau's D.C. Days Scheduled for Feb. 22-24, 2010
- Bills of Interest
- Information Resources

House and Senate Hear Slate of Water Bills

During these first two weeks of the 2010 legislative session, both the Senate Environment, Water, and Energy Committee and the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees heard a plateful of water bills.

The House heard several bills of interest. [HB 2591](#), sponsored by Rep. Jeff Morris (D-Mount Vernon) would significantly raised the fees charged for the processing of water right permit applications. Additionally the bill would implement a registration process for permit exempt wells and place additional fees on such wells and the drilling of the same. WFB expressed opposition mainly due to the fact that the fee increases will not fully fund the program, would likely displace current general fund dollars provided to the program, and thus result in higher fees with no tangible processing benefit.

[HB 2508](#), Ecology request legislation sponsored by Rep. Brian Blake (D-Aberdeen) and its companion, [SB 6267](#), sponsored by Sen. Phil Rockefeller (D-Bainbridge Island) were heard in their respective committees. WFB and many other water users support part of the bill which would clean up the cost reimbursement program established several years ago which allows folks in the permit processing line to pay for the permit processing of all senior applications in their watershed. The portion of the bill we oppose is the provision that would allow Ecology to require water right applicants, in a basin deemed to have no water available for appropriation, to develop a mitigation plan within three years (essentially making the permit application water budget neutral) or have the permit cancelled. We oppose this provision because it would provide broad new authority to the agency without providing a significant public benefit. It would shrink the permit backlog, but only because it would dismiss many applications. It does not cost the state to have a list of permits ready to be processed when water becomes available. Either processing the permits or letting them sit in a line awaiting new water or a finding of water availability is better than forcing permit applicants to develop costly mitigation plans or get out of line and lose their priority date.

Several bills attempting to deal with issues such as have been faced in the Upper Kittitas basin were also heard. [HB 2542](#), sponsored by Rep. Hinkle (R-Cle Elum) and [HB 2548](#), sponsored by Bruce Chandler (R-Granger), would attempt to limit the ability of Ecology to close basins without sufficient information indicating a lack of available water. WFB supports the attempts to find a balance in dealing with basins that may not have sufficient water for present and future needs. More water bills will be heard in the next week or so, and we will keep you all up-to-date on any movement.

New Fees for Hydraulic Projects

In the latest twist in a multi-decade battle over hydraulic permit approvals, the Senate Natural Resources, Oceans and Recreation Committee heard [SB 6448](#), sponsored by Sen. Ken Jacobsen (D-Seattle). This measure would implement a fee structure for all hydraulic projects under the jurisdiction of the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The bill does provide some potentially good streamlining provisions, but the statutorily created fee structure would add expense to agriculture and other industry's bottom line at the wrong time. Additionally it would allow the agency to set fees by rule beginning in 2012. WFB opposes fees for this permit and vigorously opposes allowing an agency to set fees by rule. This permit provides public benefit and any protections it might provide to the environment are also picked up by other permits needed to do hydraulic work, and as such no fee should be attached to the program.

Bipartisan Eminent Domain Reform Stalled Without Hearings

Eminent Domain legislation has been introduced by Sen. Franklin (D-Tacoma) and Rep. Springer (D-Kirkland) to reform the Community Renewal Law ([SB 6199/HB 2423](#)). Similarly, Sen. Carrell (R-Lakewood) and Rep. Springer introduced bills to prohibit the use of eminent domain for economic development ([SB 6200/HB 2425](#)). [SB 6200](#) had been on the Senate Judiciary Committee agenda for a hearing, but was quickly removed from the hearing schedule. As of this writing, none of the four committees with jurisdiction over these bipartisan bills has scheduled a hearing.

Hearings Monday on Ruckelshaus Extension

Bills to extend the Ruckelshaus Center discussions on critical area ordinances (CAOs) and agriculture have been introduced and will be heard on Monday, Jan. 25. [SB 6520](#) will be heard at 10:00 AM in the Senate Agriculture Committee; [HB 2891](#) will be heard at 1:30 in the House Local Government Committee.

The bills would add one more year to the time allowed for stakeholders to seek agreement to find voluntary programs, using regulations as a last resort, that would enhance agricultural viability and provide improvements to critical areas.

Counties, agricultural and environmental interests have joined together to ask the Legislature to extend the process through the end of 2010. These stakeholders believe that policy agreements are possible and worth more discussions.

The moratorium on updating CAOs with respect to agricultural activities expires July 1, 2010. If the talks and moratorium are not extended, then every county and city and the state will have to update their CAOs no later than December 2011.

Meantime, the Legislature is expected to pass legislation that would downsize the Growth Management Hearings Boards into a joint board with regional representation and regional hearings.

If the talks are not extended and successful, then the downsized board would possibly be faced with simultaneous updates and appeals at a volume that has never been seen in the 20-year history of the GMA.

Agricultural Impact Statement Bills Heard in Senate

The Senate Agricultural Committee held a hearing this week on two bills, both sponsored by Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen (D-Camano Island), that would require agencies to complete brief Agricultural Impact Statements (AIS) before purchasing land ([SB 6521](#)) and would require the use of the AIS in the SEPA process ([SB 6210](#)). Washington Farm Bureau supported both bills. Creation and use of the Agricultural Impact Statement is a priority issue for WFB in the 2010 legislative session.

Grassroots Pressure Needed for Workers' Comp Reform

Bipartisan Bill Needs Hearing

A modest, bipartisan workers' comp reform bill, [HB 2950](#), was introduced by Jeff Morris (D-Mount Vernon) and is cosponsored by four other Democrats and five Republicans. Unfortunately so far, no hearing has been scheduled for the bill.

We need your help! Please contact your representatives and Speaker Frank Chopp to let them know that you support [HB 2950](#) and that you would like a hearing for the bill before the House committee cutoff date on Feb. 2.

[Find your representative](#) or call the Legislative Hotline at (800) 562-6000

Without reform, workers' comp premiums will continue to increase. [HB 2950](#) would help lower those costs by:

- Authorizing voluntary medical provider networks;
- Clarifying the definition of "occupational disease" to make sure it only covers conditions that are primarily work-related; and,
- Allowing voluntary settlement agreements.

Please call your representatives immediately!

Human Trafficking and Disclosure

One of the contentious issues of last session may have found some resolution this year. This week a Senate committee considered [SB 6332](#), a bill sponsored by Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-Seattle) that clarifies employer disclosure requirements related to foreign workers and the issue of human trafficking.

The issue was the subject of much work during the interim. The current proposal before the legislature allows disclosure forms provided by the federal government to certain foreign temporary visa applicants to take the place of the already-required state disclosure forms. The bill also includes a penalty section – a more stringent penalty section in last year's legislation was vetoed by the governor – and a requirement that the Department of Labor and Industries begin including a human trafficking hotline phone number on its posters.

At the hearing, Farm Bureau offered several suggestions and voiced concerns about the penalty section. We support the changes allowing for the use of the federal materials. We will continue to monitor the bill and are hopeful that this session will bring some finality to this issue.

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance seems to have taken on a life of its own this session, fueled in part by almost \$100 million in "free" federal money that the state Employment Security Department would like to spend on more administration and a new computer software system.

As is usually the case with federal money, there are strings attached: The state must make one of two changes to UI -- either 1) allow benefits for part-time employees or 2) lift certain caps on job training programs.

The cost for option 1 could be anywhere from \$15 million to \$40 million, depending on the specific language of the bill. None of the federal money would help pay for the increase in benefits. Farm Bureau does not have policy on the question of whether part-time workers should receive UI benefits. However, we have concerns that extending any benefits at this time will draw down the UI fund too quickly. UI rates went up sharply this year due to the bad economy and increased layoffs, and rates are projected to at least double next year. Adding more costs to the system deprives employers of money needed to protect and expand jobs. The part-time bills sponsored by Rep. Conway (D-Tacoma) are [HB 2647](#) and [HB 2553](#), and Senator Kohl-Welles sponsored [SB 6526](#).

Option 2 is being explored, and Sen. Jim Hargrove (D-Hoquiam) has begun a similar discussion with [SB 6600](#), which is awaiting a hearing.

Two bills would also expand the UI eligibility of workers who voluntarily quit their jobs. These bills reopen a contentious issue that we thought had been settled in legislation last year, and they could increase payouts from the UI fund at a time when the fund is being depleted. Farm Bureau opposes [SB 6334](#), sponsored by Sen. Kohl-Welles (D-Seattle), and [HB 2553](#), sponsored by Rep. Conway (D-Tacoma).

Finally, [HB 2920](#), sponsored by Rep. Condotta (R- East Wenatchee), and [SB 6587](#), sponsored by Sen. Holmquist (R-Moses Lake), are designed to blunt the sharp increases in UI rates over the next three years while maintaining the solvency of the UI fund. Farm Bureau supports these measures, which have not yet been scheduled for hearings.

Last Chance to Register! WFB Campaign Management Training Seminar in Lacey Feb. 2-3, in Spokane Feb. 4-5, 2010

Note: While the deadline for registration was Thursday, we still have six seats available at each school. No additional registrations will be allowed beyond January 28 and registration will be closed when the remaining seats are filled on a first-come basis.

2010 is an election year (and so is 2011 and 2012). Actually, every year is an election year. City, county, state and federal elections mean that every year, the voters will consider accountability and change for those who hold public office.

The highly successful Farm Bureau Campaign Management Seminar is coming to Washington state in February. In Lacey Feb. 2 & 3 or in Spokane Feb. 4 & 5, candidates, spouses and campaign managers can learn the techniques (and reasons behind them) that make for successful campaigns.

“This seminar works,” said Democratic County Commissioner Terry Willis. “I used the techniques I learned at this school in my own successful campaign and I have witnessed other legislative and local candidates benefit from the same great instruction.”

Republican State Representative Joel Kretz echoed the endorsement of the seminar, saying “If you’re serious about winning, you must attend this school. It is time and money well spent.”

Farm Bureau’s campaign management training seminar was developed with input from political consultants and staff from both major political parties. The advice given has helped Democrats, Republicans and non-partisan candidates win election to office.

Videos, a case study and computerized campaign simulation have been developed to assist in the presentation. This allows participants a meaningful, hands-on experience to test techniques, tools and methods learned.

The seminar teaches how to evaluate the candidate and the electorate, build a campaign structure, raise money, enlist allies, create coalitions and get last-minute, Election Day voter attention.

Candidates are encouraged to have their spouses and campaign managers attend so key team members receive the full benefit of the training.

If you are running for local, state or congressional office, seriously considering it, or want to be prepared to help your favored candidates, then you should [Register Now](#) for the Farm Bureau Campaign Management Seminar.

- It's bi-partisan - developed with input from staff from both major parties.
- It's interactive - uses videos, case studies, and computerized campaign simulation.
- It's affordable - registration includes lunch and materials.
- It works - the success rate is greater than 75 percent, in races from local school boards to U.S. Congress.

The Lacey seminar begins at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2, and ends at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2010. The Spokane seminar begins at 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 4, and ends at 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, 2010.

Registration is limited to 40 attendees per location and fees are as follows:

Candidate

WFB Member \$150, Non-member \$200

Campaign Manager

WFB Member \$150, Non-member \$200

Candidate's Spouse

WFB Member \$100, Non-member \$150

Space is limited, so if you or someone you know would benefit from the advantages this training provides, register today. If you have questions or require additional assistance with online registration, please email [Daniel Turner](#) or call (360) 528-2908.

Register Online! WFB Legislative Days Feb. 9-10, 2010

Mark your calendars and plan to attend our annual **Legislative Days on Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 9-10, 2010**. Speaker of the House Frank Chopp will be our keynote speaker at the luncheon on Feb. 9. In a departure from previous years, the first day of the 2010 event will take place at the [Worthington Center](#) on the St. Martin University campus in Lacey. Day two will be on the Capitol campus and at the WFB Professional Office Building in Lacey. [Register online now](#) or [registration form is available for download](#) (to complete and send via e-mail, fax, or mail). Registration cost is \$50 per person. An agenda will be available closer to the event.

Attendees are responsible for securing their own hotel reservations. To make lodging arrangements, please contact the hotel of your choice. Here are a few to choose from:

- [Red Lion Olympia](#) 2300 Evergreen Park Drive SW, Olympia (360) 943-4000
- [Phoenix Inn Suites](#) 415 Capitol Way N. Olympia (360) 464-2900
- [La Quinta Inn](#), 4704 Park Center Ave NE, Lacey, (360) 412-1200

- [Comfort Inn](#), 4700 Park Center Ave NE, Lacey, (360) 456-6300
- [Holiday Inn Express](#), 4460 3rd Ave SE, Lacey, (360) 491-7985
- [Ramada Olympia](#), 4520 Martin Way E, Olympia, (360) 459-8866

Remember that WFB member get a 10% discount at [Wyndham Hotels](#) and a 20% discount at [Choice Hotels](#)!

If you have any questions, please email [Daniel Turner](#) or call (360) 528-2908. **Please plan to attend!**

Washington Farm Bureau's D.C. Days Scheduled for Feb. 22-24

Washington Farm Bureau members will meet the state's Congressional delegation and staff to discuss federal issues affecting agriculture as part of WFB's D.C. Days trip to the nation's capital, Feb. 22-24.

Participants should arrive in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, Feb. 21. The program will begin Monday morning with a group orientation and policy briefing at American Farm Bureau Federation headquarters. The program will end on Wednesday afternoon.

A block of hotel rooms has been reserved at the Holiday Inn – Capitol in Washington, D.C. The hotel is very close to the Capitol and is conveniently located across the street from American Farm Bureau Federation headquarters and the L'Enfant Plaza Metro stop. Special rates of \$208 per night for single occupancy and \$218 per night for double occupancy rooms (plus tax) are available. Reservations must be made by January 29.

Participants are responsible for making their own travel and hotel arrangements.

For more information, or to RSVP for D.C. Days 2010, email [Scott Dahlman](#) or call (800) 331-3276.

The trip also includes a foreign embassy visit, group dinner, and various tour opportunities.

Bills of Interest

The [bill tracking list](#) is available now on our website. It will be updated several times a week. WFB staff review daily summaries of House and Senate bill introductions and flag bills that might affect the operations or interests of Washington farmers and ranchers. Some bills are initially tracked with a position of "monitor" until they are fully reviewed for their impacts. There are more than 250 bills already on the tracking list for Washington Farm Bureau and more added daily.

If there is a bill of interest to you that does not appear on our tracking, please email [Daniel Turner](#) with a request that WFB staff review the bill.

Information Resources

- [Washington Farm Bureau](#)
- [Governor's Bill Actions:](#)
- [Legislative Information](#)
- Legislative Hotline: (800) 562-6000