

# **AIA** Washington Council



## **October 2025 | Advocacy Newsletter**

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# Interim Activities

## 2026 Session Prep

It's hard to believe the Washington state legislative session is only three short months away. As the second half of the biennium, the session will run for 60 consecutive days beginning on January 12th and concluding on March 12th. That means we have a very narrow window of time to accomplish our many policy goals.

Legislators are currently narrowing down their own policy priorities for the coming year while also working to address the budget challenges our state continues to face. It's important to note that all bills that did not pass in 2025 are still in play for the 2026 session, alongside new bills that will be introduced. Bills that previously passed one or more committees will return to the highest committee they reached in their house of origin.

Despite the compressed timeline, this session is critical for our profession. That's why AIAWA has been hard at work during the interim, building relationships with legislators, engaging with coalition partners and stakeholders, and laying the groundwork for the policy wins we're seeking.

### Key Dates:

- Dec. 1 – Bill prefilings begins
- Dec. 4 & 5 – House & Senate Committee Days
- Jan. 12, 2026 – First Day of Legislative Session

### Practice Act Update:

AIAWA is working on legislation to update RCW 18.08, Washington's architectural practice definition, which hasn't been meaningfully revised in 40 years. The profession has changed dramatically since then, and this update is long overdue for two key reasons.

First, the Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process has been plagued with issues, particularly around when public agencies need to work within it. A clearer definition of architectural practice will help ensure that investment in our public buildings is based on selecting the most qualified professionals, not the lowest bid. Modern buildings integrate complex mechanical, electrical, fire safety, and accessibility systems that require coordinated professional oversight to protect occupants and the public. Clear practice definitions are essential for proper QBS implementation and protecting public investment.

Second, incidental practice between professions continues to be an area of confusion. Despite our efforts to get a solid Attorney General opinion, we're left with their determination that there is no bright line delineating one profession's responsibility from another. A better definition of architectural practice will help ease this confusion.





# Interim Activities

## **Practice Act Update, continued:**

Our proposed update is based on NCARB's model law and emphasizes protection of public health, safety, and welfare as the fundamental purpose of architectural regulation. The new definition centers on protecting the public through the art and science of designing buildings and structures in a manner that safeguards public health, safety, and welfare. It also defines specific service areas to ensure comprehensive oversight from planning through construction, including investigation and consultation, design and specifications, coordination of consultants, code compliance, contract administration, and construction observation.

We're also watching for the release of a report from the Interorganizational Council on Regulation (ICOR), which brings together five professions (architecture, engineering, interior design, landscape architecture, and surveying) to develop guidance on overlapping practice boundaries. The report, five years in the making, is expected to be released ahead of the session and will help inform our work.

This update maintains existing exemptions under RCW 18.08.410 while clarifying when architectural oversight is essential for public protection. We are currently in the process of securing a sponsor and socializing the concept with legislators.

## **Interior Design Legislation:**

For the past 10 months, AIAWA members have been working with a coalition of interior designers to provide feedback on a bill they plan to introduce in the 2026 legislative session. The bill would create a Registered Commercial Interior Designer (RCID) designation in Washington state.

This comprehensive process has provided valuable insight into the scope of such a registration, particularly as AIA National has changed its stance and decided to remain neutral on this issue. AIAWA has worked closely with the coalition over these months, providing feedback and sharing concerns and observations with one guiding principle: the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the public. As architects, we understand this responsibility as described in RCW 18.08.

Because no one on the taskforce is an expert in the education, experience, and examination requirements of interior designers, we began our discussions with the understanding that a forthcoming report by the Interorganizational Council on Regulation (ICOR) would serve as the basis for the registration, particularly regarding how it aligns with licensure requirements for architects. The members of ICOR represent professionals in five related disciplines: architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, engineering, and surveying. They have been working to provide clarity on the overlap and boundaries between these professions. You can read more [here](#).



# Interim Activities

## **Interior Design Legislation, continued:**

Our taskforce's momentum has stalled due to a delay in the release of the ICOR report, which is now expected in early December. The remaining work involves finalizing the boundaries and responsibilities between professions, and without this report, we aren't confident the bill will reflect ICOR's findings. Our taskforce members on the interior design side also agree that we need to pause work on the bill's language until the report is available.

As an architect, you understand that our license protects the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Our primary concern is ensuring that if the RCID profession is regulated, we can confirm their education, experience, and examination requirements meet the standard of care in protecting the public within their scope of responsibility. The ICOR report will provide that confirmation.

We know our members have questions, and we want to give you a chance to ask them. In partnership with a team of interior designers, we will co-host two town hall-style information sessions to share our work and answer your questions. Due to the uncertain timing of the ICOR report, these sessions are still in the planning stages. We will provide information on participating in the town halls as soon as we are able to schedule them.

We look forward to the discussions and to hearing your feedback.

## **Permit Reform Legislation:**

AIAWA has been given the opportunity to advance meaningful permit reform legislation this session, one that streamlines the approval process while maintaining the safety standards and local government oversight we all value. There is strong legislative interest in permit reform, and we're working to develop a proposal that addresses these concerns thoughtfully.

Our current proposal focuses on four primary areas: expanding professional oversight beyond basic completeness reviews, authorizing fast-track approval for common low-risk building types, establishing performance-based certification programs for design professionals, and creating consistent review standards across all cities and counties. The goal is to reduce delays, particularly for the housing types most needed in Washington communities, while ensuring professional accountability through licensing, insurance requirements, and quality assurance measures.

We're currently working with our Practice Committee and coalition partners, including AELC, building officials, engineers, and the Building Code Council, to refine the bill's content so it aligns with existing laws and processes. The language isn't finalized yet, and gaining support from these stakeholder groups is critical to the bill's success.





# Interim Activities

## **Permit Reform Legislation, continued:**

An AIAWA member will be presenting on conditional permit approval to the House Local Government Committee in December, at which time we should have more concrete content to share.

## **Fix the Bricks Legislation:**

During the 2025 legislative session, Representative Donaghy introduced HB 1810, which aims to identify and incentivize the seismic retrofitting of Unreinforced Masonry (URM) buildings across our state. Though it did not advance last session, we are eager to get it across the finish line this year. This is why AIAWA is participating in a new statewide initiative, the "Fix the Bricks" campaign, in support of HB 1810.

The bill directs the Department of Commerce to conduct a study on financial incentives to reduce the burden of seismic retrofits, including tax modifications, exemptions, and special assessments. It also requires the Emergency Management Division to complete a statewide inventory of URM buildings by 2030, making this data available to local jurisdictions to guide retrofit efforts and emergency planning.

The development of this bill was a collaborative effort between the State Seismic Safety Sub-Committee and our own AIAWA Historic Resources Committee. It is a direct result of our profession's dedication to public safety and sustainable, resilient design.

Retrofitting URM buildings is not just about preparing for the next earthquake. It's also about supporting adaptive reuse and sustainable development, preserving historic architecture, creating affordable housing, and providing opportunities for small business owners and workforce development. It is a win for our communities on multiple levels.

To learn more about the campaign and how you can get involved, please watch and share the URM Retrofit Call-to-Action video: [Fix the Bricks Video](#). For a detailed overview of the proposed legislation, we've provided a fact sheet on our website: [HB 1810 Facts Sheet](#).

We are approaching the 25th anniversary of the Nisqually earthquake during the upcoming legislative session. The passage of HB 1810 would be a significant step toward ensuring our state is prepared for the next seismic event.

## **Strategic Planning Retreat**

The AIAWA Board spent time earlier this month in a strategic retreat, creating a strategic plan to guide our work for the next five years. It was an excellent day of collaboration, and we look forward to sharing a finalized version of this plan in the coming months. Thanks to all of you who participated in our member survey earlier this summer and shared your priorities with us.

# Advocacy in Action

Join us for a two-part workshop series designed to strengthen your advocacy skills and prepare you for the upcoming legislative session.

## **Part 1: Legislature + Advocacy 101**

**Date: November 18, 2025**

**Time: 12:00 PM**

**Location: Online**

In the first installment, you will delve into the essentials of advocacy. Discover how the Washington State Legislature works and how AIAWA works to safeguard our profession and address critical issues. Learn how you, as an architect, can play a pivotal role in shaping the future and engaging on matters important to you. This session will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to better understand the legislative process and become an effective advocate.

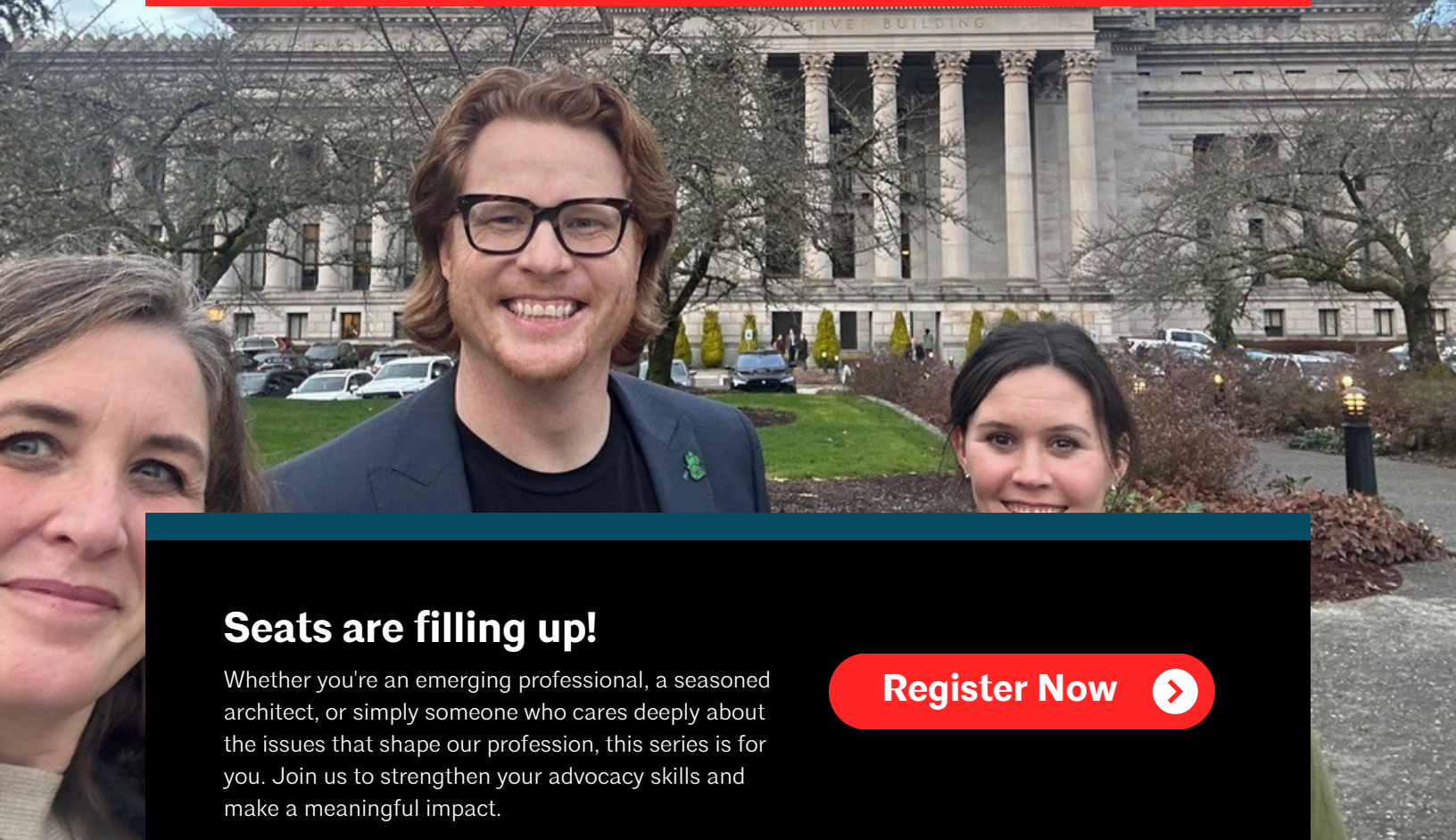
## **Part 2: Legislative Preview**

**Date: December 9, 2025**

**Time: 12:00 PM**

**Location: Online**

Part two will serve as a preview of what to expect in the 2026 legislative session, including an opportunity to hear from Senator Salomon, Chair of the Senate Local Government Committee. Gain insights into the upcoming legislative agenda and how it impacts the architectural field. Stay ahead of the curve and be prepared to actively engage in the legislative process.



## **Seats are filling up!**

Whether you're an emerging professional, a seasoned architect, or simply someone who cares deeply about the issues that shape our profession, this series is for you. Join us to strengthen your advocacy skills and make a meaningful impact.

**Register Now**





# Capitol Connections 2026

Mark your calendars for January 21, 2026, and join us for an exciting day of connecting with your legislators and addressing critical issues affecting our profession. This lobby day promises not only to be impactful but also an enjoyable experience for both members and legislators. Your participation is crucial in making our collective voice heard on matters that shape our industry's future.

## Event Details:

**Date: January 21, 2026**

**Location: Olympia, WA**

**Time: 8:30AM- 3:30PM**

We look forward to the meaningful discussions that will unfold. Save the date for what is sure to be a day filled with connection, advocacy, and shared passion for architecture.

**Register Now**



## Vote November 4th: Your Voice Matters!

Election Day is Tuesday, November 4th. Make your plan to vote today – our democracy works best when every voice is heard. Your ballot is your opportunity to help shape Washington's future. Don't miss out on this important chance to make a difference.

Visit [votewa.gov](https://votewa.gov) to verify your registration status, check voting requirements, and track your ballot.

# AIAWA 2025 Civic Design Awards

Public projects benefit an entire community and celebrating their contribution to our culture and our future is important. The AIA Washington Council Civic Design Awards celebrate design excellence in publicly funded projects located in Washington State. These projects reflect the highest standards in sustainability, innovation, building performance and overall integration with the client and surrounding communities.

We received so many wonderful submissions this year and the winners are truly the best of the best. We hope you'll consider attending the 2025 Civic Design Awards program to support great design and a robust Capital Budget—opportunities that benefit all of us.

**Date: Nov. 13th**

**Location: Historic 1625 Tacoma Place, Tacoma, in partnership with AIA SW Washington**

Meet the jury below!



**Shannon Crossley, Assoc. AIA**  
**Preservation Architect & Historian, NorthWind**  
[View Bio](#)



**Richey Madison, AIA, NOMA**  
**Senior Principal & Studio Lead, SmithGroup**  
[View Bio](#)



**Michael Stephens, AIA, NCARB**  
**Architect & Managing Partner, SGH Architects**  
[View Bio](#)



# AIA Selects New Cohort for Next to Lead

Next to Lead is a national leadership development program designed for racially and ethnically diverse women in architecture who aspire to serve in leadership roles within the AIA. You can learn more about the program [here](#).

This year's applicant pool was exceptionally competitive, and we are delighted to congratulate two individuals from Washington selected for this prestigious opportunity:

**Chien-Yi Chu, Assoc. AIA, WA STAR, Integrus Architecture**

**Ranu Singh, Assoc. AIA, NBBJ**

Congratulations Chien-Yi and Ranu!



## SEAW 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

The Structural Engineers Association of Washington (SEAW) is celebrating 75 years of advancing excellence in structural engineering. Join them for their anniversary celebration on Tuesday, October 21 at the Museum of Flight. The event is sponsored by Computers & Structures, Inc. (CSI) and promises to be a fun evening of socializing, music, dancing, and giveaways. All are welcome to attend, including architects, engineers, contractors, industry partners, students, and guests.

Date: Oct. 21

Location: Museum of Flight

[More information here.](#)

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AIA Washington Council serves as the collective voice for and a resource on state government policies that impact the practice of architecture for all architects and the profession through AIA components in Washington State.

## 2025 Board of Directors

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