

# **AIA** Washington Council



## **February 2026 | Advocacy Newsletter**

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# 2026 Legislative Session

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## Halfway There

We have officially crossed the halfway point of the 2026 legislative session, and it has been a whirlwind. Thousands of bills were introduced when the session opened in January, and the field has been narrowing ever since as proposals clear hurdles or quietly fade away. Tuesday marked the house of origin cutoff, meaning any bill not tied to revenue or the state budget had to pass off the floor of its chamber of origin to remain alive. With that milestone now behind us, lawmakers have pivoted to the opposite chamber, where the process starts again with policy committee hearings beginning this week.

All of this is unfolding against the backdrop of another state budget challenge. This is a short 60-day session where the focus is on the supplemental budget, adjusting the existing budget rather than building one from scratch. But with a significant shortfall to address, budget conversations are shaping nearly everything happening at the Capitol right now. The Economic and Revenue Forecast Council met Monday, February 16 to adopt the **official revenue forecast**, setting the table for budget proposals expected next week.

## Important Dates

- February 25 – Policy Committee Cutoff (Opposite House)
- March 2 – Fiscal Committee Cutoff (Opposite House)
- March 6 – Floor Cutoff (Opposite House)
- March 12 – Sine Die

With that context in mind, keep reading to learn more about the bills that have kept us busy through the first half of session.





# 2026 Legislative Session

## Bills Moving Forward

### Practice:

**HB 2228**- This bill directs the State Building Code Council to convene a technical advisory group to recommend amendments to the International Building Code that would allow scissor stairs in residential occupancies of more than two dwelling units where occupants are primarily permanent. Scissor stairs are two interlocking stairways with separate exits that are separately enclosed and divided by fire-resistance rated assemblies. The advisory group must consider public health, safety, welfare, and construction costs when making its recommendations, and must submit them in time for the Council to incorporate any necessary updates into the 2027 code update cycle. AIAWA is supportive of this bill, which passed the House unanimously and has already had an executive session in Senate Housing.

**HB 2353**- This bill raises the threshold for required predesign on state-funded capital construction projects from \$10 million to \$15 million, and adds an annual inflation adjustment tied to the OFM's C-100 form beginning in 2027. AIAWA has opposed this bill, as we firmly believe predesign is a critical step in efficiently planning capital projects of all sizes, as skipping it can lead to costly redesigns, change orders, and lost program elements. We met with prime sponsor Rep. Keaton, who recognizes the value of predesign but pointed to a simple reroofing project

as an example of where it shouldn't be required, which led to a productive conversation about project complexity. We proposed keeping the \$10 million base threshold while adding an inflation adjustment now, and suggested two areas for interim work with OFM: developing better definitions and guidance around when predesign is most appropriate based on project complexity rather than dollar value alone, and addressing the funding cycle timing issue where predesign work completed years before a project receives funding often has to be completely redone. Rep. Keaton did not amend the bill to reflect our threshold suggestion, but is interested in working with us during the interim on the complexity and timing issues, which we see as the more significant piece of the puzzle. The bill passed the House with broad bipartisan support and now sits in Senate Ways and Means awaiting a public hearing.



# 2026 Legislative Session

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## Practice, continued

**HB 2304**- This bill expands the types of condominium buildings eligible for an express warranty of quality and express warranty insurance coverage as an alternative to implied warranties under state law. Currently this option is available for buildings with 12 or fewer units and three or fewer stories. This bill extends that to four or fewer stories.

AIAWA is symbolically supportive of this bill, though we recognize it does not address the deeper issues affecting architects, particularly around insurance and liability. We attended a meeting with prime sponsor Rep. Taylor, who framed this as a small but meaningful step and expressed interest in working with us and other stakeholders during the long session to tackle the bigger issues that discourage condo construction in Washington.

The bill passed the House unanimously and is scheduled for an executive session in Senate Housing on February 20th.

## Budget

**HB 2100**- This bill would impose a 5 percent payroll expense tax on large operating companies, defined as companies with more than 20 employees, more than \$5 million in gross receipts, and a US address, on wages paid to employees above the Social Security wage limit. Companies with total employee wages

under \$7 million would be exempt, and employers would not be permitted to deduct the tax from employee wages. Revenue from the tax would flow into the state general fund initially, with 51 percent directed to the newly created Well Washington Fund beginning in 2027. That fund would be restricted to spending on higher education, health care, cash assistance programs, and energy and housing programs. The bill had a public hearing in the House Finance committee in January but has been largely dormant since. While it is not subject to legislative cutoffs due to its fiscal nature, it is unlikely to advance based on what we are hearing from our lobbyists and legislators.



# 2026 Legislative Session

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## Budget, continued

**SB 6346**– This bill would establish a 9.9 percent individual income tax on Washington residents with adjusted gross income exceeding \$1 million, beginning in 2028. The tax includes a \$1 million standard deduction, so only income above that threshold is subject to the tax, and it is estimated to affect roughly the top half of one percent of Washington households. For pass-through entities, including partnerships, LLCs, and S corporations, the bill includes an election to pay the tax at the entity level at the same 9.9 percent rate, with individual owners receiving a corresponding credit. On the B&O side, the bill increases the small business B&O credit, raises the annual B&O filing threshold to \$250,000, and expires the existing B&O surcharge on businesses with over \$250 million in taxable income one year early. The bill also explicitly amends Initiative 2111, which currently prohibits income taxes, to carve out an exemption for this new tax. The bill passed out of the Senate and is currently in the House Finance Committee awaiting a public hearing

## Livability

**HB 1175**–Originally introduced last session, this bill has been revived this year and requires cities and towns to

allow neighborhood stores and neighborhood cafes in any zone that permits residential uses. A neighborhood store is defined as a convenience grocery or mini-market of at least 500 square feet, and a neighborhood cafe is similarly at least 500 square feet, with a requirement to offer food if alcoholic beverages are served. Cities retain some regulatory flexibility, including the ability to set parking requirements, limit hours of operation, and establish maximum square footage requirements, though cafes must be permitted to operate for at least 12 consecutive hours. The bill passed off the House floor and is now awaiting a public hearing in Senate Local Government.





# 2026 Legislative Session

## Livability, continued

**SB 6026**- This bill would require cities of 30,000 or more and non-rural GMA counties to allow residential uses in commercially and mixed-use zoned areas, and limits the ability of jurisdictions to require ground floor commercial as a condition of permitting residential development. Jurisdictions can require ground floor commercial in up to 20% of their total commercial and mixed-use area, and can go beyond that if they offer a height incentive up to 85 feet. Jurisdictions can also preserve their ground floor commercial requirements by completing an empirical study by a real estate economics expert and updating their regulations accordingly. The bill passed the Senate floor with bipartisan support, and AIAWA is supportive while continuing to work on improving the bill's nuance to make it work well in practice. It now sits in House Local Government awaiting a public hearing.

## Dead Bills

**SB 5857**- Sponsored by Sen. Schoesler, this bill would have codified into law the existing architecture and engineering fee structure used in the School Construction Assistance Program while cutting the allowable rates by 50 percent. AIAWA strongly opposed this bill, as reducing state funding assistance forces districts to bridge the gap with local resources, diverting scarce funds from educational programs or accepting reduced design services. The impact falls

hardest on low-income districts that simply don't have the local resources to make up the difference. We also raised concerns about the misuse of the AIA Handbook of Professional Practice, which has not been updated since 2013 and was never intended as a prescriptive fee schedule for government funding formulas. Quality architectural services are fundamental to student success, and cutting funding assistance undermines that for districts across the state. The bill received only a public hearing in Senate Ways and Means, failed to advance, and is dead for the year.

**HB 2381**- Sponsored by Rep. Duerr, this bill would have directed the State Building Code Council to adopt a mandatory appendix to the International Building Code establishing a performance-based compliance pathway for low-rise residential buildings of one to six stories. Rather than prescribing specific materials or methods, a performance-based pathway allows buildings to demonstrate compliance through measurable outcomes. The bill would have required the Council to convene a technical advisory group to develop performance criteria and recommendations, with a goal of harmonized compliance across the building code, energy code, and greenhouse gas emissions rules, including embodied carbon. The bill failed to advance out of the Rules committee and is dead for the year.

# 2026 Legislative Session

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## Dead bills, continued

**HB 2273**– Also sponsored by Rep. Duerr, this bill would have directed the State Building Code Council to adopt embodied carbon emissions reduction standards for new construction, additions, and renovations of 100,000 square feet or larger. Projects could comply through one of three paths: reusing at least 45 percent of an existing structure, demonstrating reduced emissions in covered building products using environmental product declarations, or completing a whole building life-cycle assessment. The bill also would have required the 2030 state building code to achieve a 30 percent reduction in embodied carbon emissions, with incremental progress through the 2027 and 2030 code cycles. AIAWA was supportive of this bill and the work Rep. Duerr is doing in this space.

While the bill failed to advance out of its fiscal committee and is dead for the year, the conversation around embodied carbon in Washington is far from over. There will be a public comment period beginning in May on two proposals for an optional embodied carbon appendix to the state building code, and our climate committee recently put on a **well-received presentation** walking members through those proposals. We will keep you posted as that process moves forward.

**HB 1810**– Originally introduced last session by Rep. Donaghy, HB 1810 directs the Department of Commerce to study financial incentives for seismic retrofits of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings, including tax modifications, exemptions, and special assessments, and requires the Emergency Management Division to complete a statewide inventory of URM buildings by 2030. AIAWA has been a strong supporter of this bill and is part of the statewide "Fix the Bricks" campaign, which grew out of collaborative work between the State Seismic Safety Sub-Committee and our own Historic Resources Committee. The bill failed to advance out of appropriations this year, likely a casualty of the current state budget situation, but we remain committed to seeing it across the finish line in future session. As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Nisqually earthquake, the urgency of this work is as clear as ever. The City of Seattle, PNSN, and EERI are hosting a free commemorative event on February 26th at Seattle City Hall to reflect on what we've learned and what it will take to be ready for the next one. The event is in person only. Register [here](#).





## Support Your Profession: Invest in APC

Your advocacy matters, and so does your role in shaping the legislative landscape that influences our profession. AIA Washington Council is your advocate in state government, diligently working on key issues that impact the architecture community.

The legislative and regulatory environment is a critical arena that directly affects how we provide professional services. The AIWA Architects Political Committee (APC) is a vital part of our advocacy efforts. It supports lawmakers who champion our priorities, endorsing their campaigns and raising awareness about issues crucial to architects.

### What APC Does:

- **Supports Advocacy Priorities:** APC backs lawmakers aligned with our advocacy priorities and the values of our profession.
- **Builds Relationships:** By supporting campaigns and engaging with legislators, APC strengthens the relationships between AIWA and lawmakers.
- **Amplifies Your Voice:** APC enables architects to become a powerful voice for the design and construction industry, positively influencing legislative decisions.

We can't do it alone. Your expertise and advocacy are critical for the architectural profession. Investments in APC ensures face-to-face opportunities to educate legislators about our work and provides a platform to advocate for the priorities of Washington architects.



### Benefits of Your Investment:

- **Education Opportunities:** Your support enables face-to-face interactions, educating legislators about the architectural profession.
- **Advocacy Platform:** APC provides a platform for architects to advocate for our priorities, ensuring our voices are heard.
- **Political Influence:** By contributing to candidates aligned with our values, APC gives architects a strong political voice in state offices.

### How You Can Contribute:

Your investment in APC is an investment in the future of our profession. Contribute to support candidates who align closely with AIWA's legislative priorities and our shared values.

Visit the [APC Contribution Page](#) to learn more.

# Three Washington Architects Elevated to Fellow

AIA Elevates 78 Architects to the College of Fellows- [Learn more here.](#)



**Keith Hui, FAIA**



**Kevin Kudo-King, FAIA**



**Thomas V. Lawrence, FAIA**



Please join us in congratulating Stephen Black, AIA, of Aetta Architects, who has been appointed to serve as AIAWA's Western Washington representative on OSPI's School Facilities Technical Advisory Committee. We look forward to the perspective and expertise he will bring to this important role.

## Staff



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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.

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