

AIA Washington Council



March 2025 | Advocacy Newsletter

In this issue: _____

- **Legislative Session**
- **Get Involved**
- **Capitol Connections Recap**
- **APC**
- **AIA Fellow**



2025 Legislative Session

Session Update

Washington's State Legislature is moving through the long 105-day session at an effective pace. This year, over 1,700 bills have been introduced so far. While legislation in Olympia covers a wide variety of issues, the topic on everyone's mind is addressing the budget deficit. Legislators have had to rein in their proposals this year to minimize budget impacts, meaning few new programs or high-cost legislation are moving forward.

The legislative calendar has passed its first three cut-off deadlines:

- February 21: Bills that failed to pass out of their policy committees are now dead for the year
- February 28: Bills that did not pass out of their fiscal committees are also considered dead
- March 12: Chamber of Origin cutoff, requiring all bills to have passed out of their originating chamber into the opposite chamber to remain alive

Certain bills with significant budgetary impacts are exempt from these deadlines. These bills, considered "necessary to implement the budget" (NTIB), will remain alive until the session concludes (Sine Die).

With the Chamber of Origin deadline now behind us, legislative focus shifts to the next phase.

Bills are making their way across the rotunda to be considered by policy committees in the opposite chamber. Each proposal faces new scrutiny, potential amendments, and a different political dynamic. The coming weeks will determine which measures ultimately complete the full legislative process before the regular session adjourns.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- Wednesday, April 2: Policy Committee Cutoff, Opposite House
- Tuesday, April 8: Fiscal Committee Cutoff, Opposite House
- Wednesday, April 16: Opposite House Floor Cutoff
- Sunday, April 27: Sine Die



2025 Legislative Session



State Budget Update

The state's budget situation continues to be the central focus in Olympia, with significant developments occurring as we approach the release of formal proposals.

How We Got Here

Washington State currently operates on a balanced budget through June 30, 2025. However, the state faces a projected gap between expected tax revenue and existing financial commitments over the next four years. The budget process began last fall when state agencies submitted funding requests to the Office of Financial Management (OFM). By law, the outgoing governor had to propose a four-year budget in December that did not assume new revenue or changes to existing law. This initial "**Book 1 Budget**" from Governor Inslee's team included approximately \$12 billion in cuts across healthcare, higher education, human services, and early learning programs. Estimates of the actual deficit vary significantly, with figures ranging from \$6.6 billion to over \$15 billion, depending on the source.

Economic Forecast and Budget Timeline

The Economic & Revenue Forecast Council will release its updated revenue forecast on March 18th, which will serve as the foundation for crafting the

biennial operating, capital, and transportation budgets. Following this forecast, the House and Senate budget proposals are expected to be released during the week of March 24th.

Budget Approaches

As budget conversations intensify ahead of the March 18th forecast, three distinct approaches have emerged to address the deficit:

Senate Republicans have taken the first formal step by releasing their "**Save Washington**" budget proposal. This plan would spend \$75.6 billion over the next biennium—a 5% increase from the current cycle—with significant new spending directed toward K-12 and higher education. Their approach aims to fund government programs without introducing new taxes by utilizing existing surplus funds, pausing planned expansions for state-subsidized childcare, and replacing previously negotiated state worker pay raises with one-time \$5,000 bonuses. While this Republican proposal may not heavily influence the forthcoming majority proposals, it aligns with Governor Ferguson's stated preference for avoiding new taxes if possible.

Governor Ferguson has outlined approximately \$4 billion in **additional spending reductions**, building on the \$3 billion in savings identified in former Governor Inslee's December budget proposal. Ferguson has cited a \$15 billion budget shortfall—the highest figure among the competing estimates—and has emphasized improving government efficiency before considering new revenue options. His cost-reduction framework targets recently launched programs, those funded by temporary federal aid, and services with limited reach or performance tracking. His approach includes consolidating agency management roles, cutting administrative positions, limiting equipment purchases, and reducing travel expenses.

2025 Legislative Session



Budget Approaches, continued

Legislative Democrats have generally used a \$12 billion deficit figure and have signaled that while budget reductions are necessary, they don't believe cuts alone will sustain essential services that Washingtonians rely on. House Democrats recently launched a **public campaign** illustrating what a "no-revenue" budget would look like under Governor Inslee's proposal, highlighting the impacts of potential cuts. Senate revenue leaders have begun regular meetings with business community leaders to discuss various revenue options.

Potential Revenue Options

While most budget and tax conversations are occurring behind closed doors, several revenue-generating options are under consideration. These include various forms of wealth taxation, payroll taxes targeting employers with high-income employees, Business & Occupation tax increases, capital gains tax expansion, increases to the Real Estate Excise Tax, and new taxes on various sectors and services. The final approach will likely combine spending reductions with selected revenue measures to address the state's financial challenges before the session concludes on April 27.

2025 Legislation

Practice

SB 5729: This legislation, sponsored by Senator Gildon, claims to encourage affordable housing construction by streamlining permitting, but AIAWA strongly opposes this legislation. While the bill's preamble addresses the housing crisis, the actual language does not limit its application to residential projects. The bill would deem any project permit complete if stamped by a professional engineer or architect but lacks crucial specificity about its intended purpose. This would significantly reduce building official oversight for virtually all building types, potentially allowing projects as complex as a nuclear power plant to be considered complete with minimal review. The bill would effectively create a self-certification process for any building project without appropriate limitations or safeguards. The legislation creates confusion by inconsistently using terms throughout and inappropriately assigns oversight authority for architects' insurance to the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers & Land Surveyors. The bill is scheduled for a public hearing on March 18 and executive session on March 21. As professionals charged with protecting public health, safety, and welfare, AIAWA will be testifying in opposition to this legislation and working to pause its advancement this session.

SB 5571: This bill, sponsored by Senator Bateman, prohibits cities and counties from requiring or excluding exterior cladding materials that comply with the Building Code. AIAWA has expressed concerns that while the bill aims to reduce housing costs, it removes local oversight that helps ensure building exteriors meet important resiliency and durability standards beyond minimum code requirements.

2025 Legislative Session



Practice, continued

Local jurisdictions often have valid reasons for requiring specific exterior materials based on climate considerations and long-term performance that may not be prioritized when decisions are driven primarily by upfront construction costs. The bill has passed the Senate and is scheduled for a public hearing in the House Local Government Committee on March 18.

HB 1183: Requires cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act to modify setback, height limit, and gross floor area requirements for specific developments. The bill, by Rep. Duerr, allows insulated exterior walls to project up to eight inches into setbacks, permits buildings to exceed maximum roof heights to accommodate additional insulation or solar panels, and ensures gross floor area is measured from interior wall faces. It also prohibits jurisdictions from requiring facade modulation, upper-level setbacks, or off-street parking for affordable housing, passive house projects, building conversions to housing, modular construction, and mass timber construction. This bill passed the House and is scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate on March 17.

Livability

HB 1491: Transit-Oriented Development promotes the creation of walkable, mixed-use communities around transit hubs that reduce transportation costs for residents while strengthening community connections. The bill, by Rep. Reed, establishes minimum density standards near rail and bus stations, requiring cities planning under the Growth Management Act to allow higher-density residential and mixed-use development in these areas. AIAWA strongly supports this approach to addressing Washington's housing needs, particularly the bill's incentive-based elements like the 20-year property tax exemption and FAR bonuses for affordable housing projects. We advocate for TOD policies that recognize Washington's diverse communities—from dense urban centers to smaller cities—and use incentives to make these projects financially viable. The bill has passed the House and has a public hearing in the Senate on March 14, with an executive session scheduled for March 21.

SB 5184: The Parking Reform and Modernization Act promotes flexibility in parking decisions based on actual local needs rather than arbitrary minimums. The bill, introduced by Sen. Bateman, limits residential parking requirements to no more than 0.5 spaces per dwelling unit and commercial parking to no more than one space per 1,000 square feet, while eliminating minimum requirements for existing buildings undergoing change of use, affordable housing, and other specific uses. AIAWA supports this legislation as it enables more creative architectural solutions, reduces housing costs, and creates opportunities for more walkable, human-scaled environments. The bill has passed the Senate, had a House public hearing on March 14, and is scheduled for executive session on March 21.

2025 Legislative Session



Education

SJR 8200/SB 5186: These proposals, by Sen. Cortes and Sen. Krishnadasan, would have lowered the voter approval threshold for school bonds from the current 60% supermajority to a simple majority (50%+1). Unfortunately, both bills failed to advance this session, dying in the Senate Rules Committee. There remains a small chance they could be considered necessary to implement the budget (NTIB), but this is unlikely. AIAWA was in strong support of this reform as Washington's current requirement has resulted in approximately 60% of school bond measures failing over the past two decades. Many districts with critical facility needs repeatedly fall short by small margins, creating inequitable access to state matching funds for construction. This disproportionately impacts districts with fewer resources and creates a two-tiered system where wealthy districts pass bonds while others struggle. As stewards of the built environment, architects recognize that modern school design improves educational outcomes through better learning environments. AIAWA will continue advocating for this reform in future sessions.

Climate

HB 1458: Embodied Carbon would have made embodied carbon emissions reduction part of the building code for structures larger than 50,000 square feet, targeting a 30% reduction in construction-related emissions. The bill did not advance this year, dying in the House Appropriations Committee. AIAWA played a key role in creating this legislation, which offered three compliance pathways: building reuse (automatically compliant if reusing 45% of an existing structure), material carbon reduction (achieving emissions reductions across 90% of covered materials), or whole building assessment (demonstrating reductions through life cycle assessment). While we were eager to see this bill move forward this year, we are pleased with the progress it made in its first legislative session. Members of AIAWA's Climate Committee provided direct feedback to the bill sponsor and will continue working on this important legislation during the interim to prepare for future sessions.



Get Involved

Take Part in the 2025 Legislative Session

There are plenty of opportunities to take part in the legislative session, both as part of AIA's efforts or on your own. The first step is deciding which issues you are most interested in, then finding out how best to engage. We can help!

Ways to Participate:

Follow Your Legislators

You can sign up for your legislators' update emails via the [Legislature's website](#). Find each of your three legislators and go to their home pages to register.

Contact Your Legislators

Email or call your legislators to let them know your opinion on a specific bill. Include the bill number if possible, and offer points specific to your experience. You can find your legislative district and legislator contact information [here](#).

Testify on a Bill

Any member of the public can sign up to testify on a bill at its public hearing (this is the first step to considering a bill in committee; any bill may have multiple public hearings if it keeps moving through the process). Testimony is typically limited to two minutes (sometimes less depending on the number of people testifying and the committee's agenda) and can be done both in-person and virtually. After signing up on Legislature's website for virtual testimony, you'll receive a Zoom link to enter the hearing. You may also submit written testimony. Learn more [here](#).

Track A Bill

Sign up for notifications regarding specific bills via the [Legislature's website](#). Enter the bill number and hit Search. Then click "Get Email Notifications".

Register Your Position on a Bill

You can weigh in pro or con on a bill by entering your name, email and city. Committee members receive pro/con lists as they are considering legislation. Get your position on a bill noted for the legislative record [here](#).

Need Help?

Contact [Samantha](#) for help accessing the Legislature, commenting on bills, figuring out a bill's status, or to provide testimony.

Stay Informed and Get Involved:

We encourage you to stay informed and participate in the legislative process. Your engagement is vital, and we want to hear your voice. Consider joining one of our policy committees for the best opportunity to influence ongoing legislation.

For more information and to get involved, please reach out to [Samantha](#).



Capitol Connections 2025

Our 2025 Capitol Connections Lobby Day made a powerful impact in Olympia! Fifty AIAWA members met with 59 legislative offices, advocating for transit-oriented development, school bond reform, parking modernization, and robust capital budget funding.

Thank you to everyone who participated and made this day of advocacy such a success! Your engagement ensures our profession's voice remains influential in shaping Washington's built environment.





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.



Washington Council

Elevated to Fellow: Brendan Connolly



The 2025 Jury of Fellows from the American Institute of Architects has **elevated Brendan Connolly, FAIA, LEED AP**, to its prestigious College of Fellows. This distinguished honor recognizes members who have made significant national contributions to the architecture profession.

Brendan Connolly, FAIA, LEED AP, has focused his career on creating innovative built environments for educational and corporate clients. His passion for design runs from the earliest stages of conceptual development through the final days of construction, resulting in work that is both beautifully conceived, and of the highest technical rigor. Brendan's design leadership is strengthened by his ability as a keen listener, understanding of cost effective sustainable strategies, as well as his strong project management and verbal and graphic communication skills.

Brendan works nationally on educational projects, student housing, and corporate workplaces, all with the same attention to design, and high performing sustainable buildings and landscapes. With extensive experience in the design of deep green projects including net zero energy and Living Buildings, he is dedicated to integrated thinking and collaboration to realize client aspirations and goals. Brendan serves on Mithun's Board of Directors, and serves as a lecturer and member of the Professional Advisory Council of the University of Washington College of Built Environments.

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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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