

AIA Washington Council



Summer 2026 | Advocacy Newsletter

In this issue: _____

- **Interior Design Legislation**
 - **Survey**
 - **Member Op-eds**
- **Interim Activities**
- **New Positions Opening**
 - **Young Architect Rep**
 - **State Board Rep**
 - **SFx Rep**

Advocacy Corner



Since We Last Wrote

After a short but jam packed legislative session, AIAWA has kept up the pace. While Olympia is in the interim between sessions, our committees and staff have been busy meeting with legislators and agency staff, tracking early movement on issues like the margins tax, and gathering member input on legislation that could shape the profession for years to come.

This is also an election year in Washington. All State House seats are up for reelection, along with roughly half of the Senate seats, and a significant number of retirements and open seats mean the legislative makeup will likely look quite different heading into the 2027 session. As a reminder, Washington's state primary election is August 4. If you're able, please consider supporting AIAWA's PAC as we work to build relationships with candidates who understand the value architects bring to our state.

Read on to see what we've been up to this interim, and how you can help inform our work on the issues ahead.

Interior Design Legislation

Member Input Needed

AIAWA is asking for member input on proposed legislation to register commercial interior designers in Washington state. AIAWA has not established a position on this issue, and your feedback will directly inform the Board's determination.

Background

In August 2024, members of Washington's chapter of the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) contacted AIAWA regarding legislation to create a registration for commercial interior designers. In early 2025, a Joint Taskforce was formed between the Consortium for Interior Design-Washington and AIA members to collaborate in exploring 2026 legislation for the licensing of commercial interior designers in Washington state.

With a commitment to transparency and inclusion, AIAWA assembled a group of members representing all local chapters and the full spectrum of member perspectives, from strong support to strong opposition. Throughout this process, AIA members consistently focused on protection of public health, safety and welfare and professional accountability.



Advocacy Corner



Interior Design, cont'd.

Over the past 18 months, the Joint Taskforce has:

- Convened 8 full working sessions with the full Joint Taskforce
- Hosted 2 virtual town halls open to all AIA and IIDA members, including one specifically for small firms (recordings available [here](#))
- Consulted with NCARB, AIA National, and the **Interorganizational Committee on Regulation (ICOR)**
- Reviewed 4 versions of the proposed 2026 bill

From the Consortium: "HB 2721 establishes a certificate of registration and requires registration for individuals who choose to practice within the defined Registered Commercial Interior Design scope and use the associated title and stamp/seal authority. Within that defined scope, the bill includes enforcement provisions that make unregistered practice unlawful. An interior designer can't practice commercial interior design without being registered under this bill, unless they fall under the scope of exemptions defined in HB 2721." (HB 2721 Sec. 3(3)) "We are moving commercial interior design into a regulated practice that only registered interior designers and architects can do, because it is a practice that impacts public health, safety and welfare."

Prior to the start of the 2026 legislative session, the Joint Taskforce mutually agreed to await the release of ICOR's report on **Practice Overlap** before making final decisions and posting a bill to the legislature. The report was to provide clarity on whether the regulation of the practice of commercial interior design was necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, a threshold required by **RCW 18.118** in the state of Washington.

Unfortunately, the ICOR report raised more questions than it answered, and its late release in March 2026 meant that legislative cutoffs had already passed. The Consortium received a courtesy hearing, but no bill advanced.

After careful review of the bill, the ICOR report, and information provided from NCARB and AIA National, AIAWA's internal taskforce members voted unanimously in late May, with one abstention, to recommend reducing the scope of the bill to title protection only, which would establish protection of the use of the title Registered Commercial Interior Designer as a measured first step. This approach mirrors what many other states have done: establishing a starting point that can be updated as evidence of public safety necessity develops, allowing for more comprehensive legislation over time.

The Consortium for Interior Design-Washington declined this approach and stated its intent to proceed with 2027 legislation regulating the practice of commercial interior design.

Critical Request

As Joint Taskforce deliberations continue, your voice is needed to establish the Board's formal legislative position for the anticipated 2027 bill.

Advocacy Corner



Interior Design, cont'd.

Please read the most recent bill, **HB 2721**, in full. To avoid introducing bias, we are not providing a summary. If you have not already submitted comments, please choose one of the following options. All input will require your name and AIA member number, and all comments will be kept confidential.

1. Complete a brief survey: **HB 2721 Survey**
2. Email your feedback directly to **tsueirro@aiawa.org**
3. Contact your **AIAWA board representative** and share your feedback by email or in conversation

Work will continue on proposed 2027 legislation, and AIAWA needs to hear from you to formulate our legislative position and develop future testimony. AIA Washington Council's position on this legislation will be determined by our Board of Directors, who represent the members of their local chapters. If a clear consensus emerges from member input, the Board will adopt that position, whether support, neutral, or opposition. If consensus cannot be reached, AIA Washington Council will remain neutral.

Please provide your feedback by end of business **July 24**.

Thank you for participating in advocacy on this important issue. Both the AIAWA Council Board members and the Board's Joint Taskforce representatives are eager to hear from you.

Before you respond, you may also want to read the op-eds below, written by taskforce members representing both sides of this issue.



Advocacy Corner

Member Perspectives

The following four perspectives were written by AIAWA members who serve on the Joint Taskforce. Two support HB 2721 as written, and two oppose it. These reflect the views of their individual authors and do not represent an official AIAWA position.

Perspective: In Support

By Veronica Finney, AIA, NCIDQ, IIDA, WELL AP, LEED GA

Principal | NW Region Interior Design Leader, DLR Group

As a Principal at a global integrated design firm, a licensed architect in Washington State, and an NCIDQ-certified interior designer, I have experienced the perspectives—and the concerns—of both professions. That unique perspective is why I support advancing interior design legislation in Washington State.

Having practiced on both sides of the profession, I've found that architects and interior designers share far more common ground than differences. We are united by our responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public while creating spaces that improve people's lives.

At its core, this legislation is about recognizing the qualifications of certified commercial interior designers and strengthening public protection. Interior designers complete rigorous education, examination, and experience requirements to develop expertise in life safety, accessibility, building codes, and the functional performance of interior environments. Recognizing those qualifications through thoughtful legislation provides greater clarity for clients, building officials, and the public.

As architects, we're trained to think carefully about public safety, professional accountability, and scope of practice. Those same values are what lead me to support this legislation. It does not diminish the role of architects or authorize interior designers to practice architecture. Rather, it establishes a clear framework that recognizes qualified professionals while reinforcing accountability for the work they perform.

Our industry has never been more collaborative. The best projects result from architects, interior designers, engineers, contractors, and owners working together, each contributing specialized expertise. Recognizing the competency of certified commercial interior designers strengthens that collaboration by creating clearer professional distinctions—not competition.

As someone who practices as both an architect and an interior designer, I don't view this legislation as a matter of protecting professional boundaries. I see it as an opportunity to modernize our regulatory framework to better reflect today's practice. Professional regulation through a title act with stamp-and-seal privileges for qualified commercial interior designers further defines the extensive qualifications required to earn that credential while strengthening public protection through clear accountability and recognized standards of practice.

Ultimately, this legislation recognizes expertise, improves access to qualified design professionals, and reinforces our shared responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. I hope my fellow architects will view this legislation not as a shift in professional boundaries, but as an opportunity to recognize qualified expertise, strengthen public protection, and reinforce the collaborative future of the design professions in Washington State.

Advocacy Corner

Member Perspectives, cont'd.

Perspective: In Opposition

By Tom Rieger, AIA

Partner | Carve Architects

Title Act or Practice Act?

As a small architecture firm, we support professional recognition for interior designers. The question is not whether interior designers are qualified professionals. The question is whether Washington should move beyond title recognition and create a separate regulated scope of practice.

A title act recognizes credentials and protects a professional designation. A practice act grants legal authority to perform and, in some cases, sign, seal, and submit permit documents for work within a defined scope.

For small firms, that distinction matters.

Many architecture firms already provide interior design services as part of a coordinated design process. Our clients often hire us to deliver both architectural and interior design services under a single contract and a single point of responsibility. A practice act creates overlap in services that architects have historically provided and may require clients to navigate additional consultants, contracts, and regulatory requirements.

The issue is not competition. Competition already exists. The issue is whether a new regulatory framework is necessary and whether it provides a measurable public benefit.

Architects are already licensed and responsible for coordinating code compliance, accessibility, life safety, occupancy classifications, and other health, safety, and welfare requirements that are frequently affected by interior renovations. Even limited interior alterations can have implications beyond finishes and furnishings.

AIA Washington has supported a title-bill approach while expressing concerns about proposals that include stamp-and-seal authority and expanded practice rights, noting that the evidence traditionally required to justify a new practice act has not been demonstrated.

As this discussion continues, I encourage architects to consider a simple question:

If the goal is professional recognition, why isn't a title act enough?

A title act recognizes qualifications. A practice act changes who can provide services. For small firms that already offer integrated architecture and interior design services, that distinction has real consequences for our clients and our practice.



Advocacy Corner

Member Perspectives, cont'd.

Perspective: In Support

By Mark Cork, AIA LEED AP

Partner | Mahlum Architects

I am writing as a partner at Mahlum Architects to express our firm's support for the Consortium for Interior Design – Washington and its efforts to promote and ultimately pass an Interior Design Practice Act in Washington State.

Mahlum designs institutional projects in the public realm through an integrated process in which our architects and interior designers work side-by-side and in collaboration with other design and engineering professionals. Our architects and interior designers rely on the complementary skillsets and expertise that each brings to the project to enhance and optimize the quality of the built environment **and** the health, safety, and welfare of our building occupants.

I have been a member of the AIA WA Council/Consortium for Interior Design – WA Joint Taskforce, which has worked collaboratively to refine proposed bill language and discuss the timing of the legislative approach. The relationship between our organizations has been positive and one that I hope will continue.

Interior design licensing legislation was last proposed in Washington in 2005. At that time, the Department of Licensing reported that interior design licensure was not needed in part because of a lack of evidence that the consumer was being harmed in the absence of licensure. A focus of WA Council's work within the Taskforce has been in seeking an answer to this question: is the public being harmed today by the absence of interior design licensing legislation?

This is no longer the question we should be asking; the answer will continue to be "no" as long as architects are available to do this work. Through this lens, the consequence is borne by qualified interior design professionals who have demonstrated—through education, examination, and experience—their competency to practice commercial interior design within defined practice boundaries.

The interior design profession, particularly in the commercial realm, has evolved significantly in these past twenty years and much work has been done to standardize and strengthen the pathways for demonstrating professional qualifications of interior designers. Most significant are the 2021 NCARB/CIDQ Joint Report of Architecture and Interior Design which compares competency requirements and examinations of the two professions, and the 2025 International Council on Regulation (including both NCARB and CIDQ as members) report on Practice Overlap Guidance, which identifies practice overlap and provides guidance on defining appropriate practice boundaries among design and engineering disciplines.

While these and other initiatives have not answered **all** the questions that our taskforce has raised (nor could they, really), they have demonstrated a highly professional level of effort, commitment, and rigor from the interior design profession that has led us to this conversation. The time is right to recognize our interior design partners and their profession in Washington State through engagement and support of this legislative process.

Many months and much work remain before the end of the 2027 legislative session, and ongoing collaboration can help ensure the final language appropriately protects the interests of both

Advocacy Corner

professions and the public. I hope that AIA WA Council will continue to engage in this process and, in so doing, can find its way to a position of support for this legislation.

Our professions seek the same outcome – a vibrant, safe, and resilient built environment that benefits all – and we are stronger when we pursue that goal together.

Perspective: In Opposition

By Dave Buescher, AIA

2024 AIAWA Council Board President

Principal of Small Firm in E. Washington

I oppose the proposed interior design legislation in Washington State because I believe the bill language would grant licensure to interior designers that encompasses a scope of practice that exceeds their demonstrated education, testing, and professional qualifications. My concern is that the legislation uses broad language allowing interior designers to oversee work involving life safety, egress, fire protection, building systems, and potentially structural coordination, without requiring testing or education comparable to that of architects.

A key issue for me is the apparent conflict between Section 2 of their bill, which broadly defines what licensed interior designers may do, and Section 3, which states what they may not do. I believe these sections lack clarity because the permissions in Section 2 may conflict with the restrictions in Section 3, particularly around life-safety and building-code-related responsibilities. I believe the intent of the bill is rational; however, as written, the language is muddled and lacks the clarity needed to define what may be included within the scope of work of a licensed interior designer. Without clearer limits, the bill could create ambiguity around life-safety responsibilities and

potentially endanger the public's health, safety, and welfare (HSW).

I am also concerned that the NCIDQ exam does not adequately test interior designers on broader building-wide impacts. While interior designers may understand conditions within a specific room, suite, or tenant space, I do not believe they are sufficiently tested on how their decisions affect the rest of the building, including egress, vertical exiting, fire protection, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and structural systems.

Additional concerns include insufficient continuing education requirements, this bill does not strengthen the number of health, safety, and welfare education credits required over the typical NCIDQ interior designer and the number is only 5 HSW per year, well below the required number needed by licensed architects which is a total of 24 continuing education hours every 2 years with 16 being HSW. The bill is also weakly addresses issues related to conflict-of-interest protections surrounding furniture, fixtures, and equipment sales and does not clearly prevent financial conflicts tied to FFE sales.

From my perspective as an architect, the proposed Washington State interior design legislation should not move forward as currently drafted because I do not believe it clearly protects the public's health, safety, and welfare. Any expanded professional authority involving egress, fire protection, building systems, structural coordination, or code compliance must include clear scope limits, rigorous competency testing, comparable continuing education, and strong conflict-of-interest safeguards. As written, I believe the bill blurs responsibility for life-safety decisions and risks granting authority without requiring the same level of technical accountability expected of licensed architects.

Advocacy Corner



Budget & Taxes

In early June, OFM Director K.D. Chapman-See issued budget instructions to state agencies, warning that the upcoming biennium may be one of the most challenging budget cycles in recent years. Agencies have been directed to scrutinize spending priorities closely, with little expectation that current service levels can be maintained under existing revenue projections.

That message was reinforced by the state's June 26 revenue forecast, which showed the state falling roughly \$500 million short of expectations for the coming year, due in part to weaker job and wage growth than anticipated. Governor Ferguson has indicated he does not intend to pursue broad new taxes to help close the gap, a stance that stands in some tension with legislative leaders, who continue to advance other revenue proposals, including a margins tax and a statewide payroll tax..

The next major update will be the state's September revenue forecast, which will give us a clearer picture of the size of the challenge ahead of the 2027 session. We'll keep monitoring developments closely throughout the summer and fall and will share updates as more information becomes available.

Margins Tax

One of the leading revenue ideas under discussion among legislative leadership is a margins tax modeled on Texas's approach, which would replace Washington's B&O tax. The bill won't be formally introduced until the 2027 session, but draft legislation from Representative April Berg, Chair of the House Finance Committee, has already been shared with stakeholders, which is how we were able to review it early through our lobbyists.

At a high level, the proposal would gradually shift businesses from the B&O tax to a margins based tax over several years, with the transition beginning in 2028 and wrapping up by 2032. Unlike the B&O tax, which is based on gross revenue, a margins tax is generally calculated on a business's margin after certain deductions, so the impact could look quite different depending on a company's size, structure, and cost base.

Some larger technology companies have expressed interest in a corporate income tax as an alternative to the margins tax, though we don't have many details on that concept yet. Separately, an initiative has been filed to repeal the state's recently enacted "millionaires' tax," the 9.9% tax on income over \$1 million that passed this legislative session. Since current budget projections rely on meaningful revenue from that tax, its repeal would likely force lawmakers to find other revenue sources or make deeper cuts.

We'll continue tracking the margins tax proposal as it develops and will share more once formal bill language is introduced next session. If you're interested in learning more about the proposal or reviewing the draft language, feel free to reach out to

Samantha.

Advocacy Corner



Interim Updates

URM Budget Proviso

Members may recall that AIAWA advocated in support of **HB 1810** last year. The bill sought to address the risk posed by unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings, common brick construction predating World War II, which are particularly vulnerable to collapse in an earthquake due to a lack of reinforcing steel and inadequate structural connections. This is a significant concern in Washington, which faces the second highest earthquake risk in the country. While the bill did not advance, a budget proviso was included in the supplemental operating budget directing the Department of Commerce to carry forward related work.

The proviso funds a study on financial incentives to reduce the cost burden of seismic retrofits for URM buildings, examining options such as modifications to the special valuation tax, expansion of current use taxation, time-limited tax exemptions, special assessment zones, and incentives for tax-exempt entities like schools, nonprofits, and religious organizations. A report is due to the legislature by December 1, 2026. The proviso requires Commerce to seek input from a professional society representing architects in Washington, and AIAWA has been asked to serve in that capacity.

A representative from our Historic Resources Committee, along with AIAWA staff, has already met with Commerce to share input on financial incentives that could encourage URM retrofits. These included expansion of the Special Property Tax Valuation, elimination of sales tax on construction costs for seismic retrofit projects, expansion of Current Use Taxation, B&O tax relief, and resilience grants. The committee also shared case studies from its own growing library of URM retrofit examples.

We look forward to continuing as a resource to Commerce as this work moves forward.

Embodied Carbon

Last month, AIAWA's Climate Committee participated in the public comment period for the 2024 Washington State Building Code adoption cycle. We submitted general comments in support of incorporating embodied carbon provisions into the building code, along with technical comments on each of the proposals. We also had members share their support via public testimony.

We're also partnering with allied organizations to build an internal library of embodied carbon case studies for use in future legislative advocacy. As part of this effort, we'll be sending a survey to membership in the coming months to help collect relevant project information. More details to follow.



Advocacy Corner



Legislative Meetings

Much of the policy work that eventually becomes legislation starts long before a bill is ever introduced. Over the past few months, AIAWA has been building relationships with legislators and agency staff on issues that could shape future sessions, giving us early visibility into conversations before they turn into formal bills.

One example is AIAWA's new seat on Senator Bateman's Housing Partners Workgroup, which brings together stakeholder groups across the housing sector to discuss shared priorities. Having a seat at that table means architects have a voice in housing conversations from the outset, rather than only weighing in once specific bills are drafted.

We also met with David Frockt, Governor Ferguson's policy director for housing, and learned more about the state's new **Department of Housing Task Force**. The Task Force is developing recommendations for a cabinet level housing agency aimed at expanding housing supply and better coordinating the state's housing programs, with a report due to the Governor and Legislature by November 15, 2026. The conversation also touched on how AI tools might be used in streamlining housing production such as permitting, an early sign of where state thinking may be headed on that front.

Finally, we met with Representative Duerr, the only architect currently serving in the Legislature, who may reintroduce a version of her performance based codes bill from last session, **HB 2381**. That bill would allow certain buildings to meet code requirements through demonstrated performance outcomes rather than prescriptive requirements alone. She's still working with stakeholders to refine the bill's language before it returns. We may also see renewed interest in an embodied carbon bill next session.

We'll continue building on these relationships and will share updates as these issues develop further.

OFM

Last month, OFM posted new **A/E fee guidelines** for the 2027-29 capital budget cycle. Given the state's current **economic situation**, OFM made only minimal updates this year. The fee guidelines have moved from Chapter 9 to Chapter 8 of the budget instructions and are available in both **web** and **PDF** formats. Notably, OFM did not adjust the GC/CM fee curve to include progressive design build.

OFM has also posted the **2026 C-100 form**. The agency is proceeding with a short form format, which includes fewer tabs and rolled up totals, as part of an effort to streamline capital budget estimating.



Young Architect Rep

AIA Washington Council and the AIA's Young Architect Forum (YAF) are seeking nominations for the AIA Washington Council Young Architect Representative (YAR), a two year appointment beginning January 1, 2027. The YAR serves as a link between local Young Architect Forum activities and the national Institute, representing the interests of recently licensed architects on issues of leadership, mentorship, and professional growth.

To be eligible, applicants must be:

- An AIA member in good standing,
- Assigned to a Washington component
- Licensed for less than ten years for at least the first year of their term.

The role involves regular engagement with YAF leadership and members statewide, participation in national YAF meetings and focus groups, and representation at events including the AIA Leadership Conference, the AIA Conference on Architecture, and AIAWA's Capital Connections Legislative Day. Travel stipends and reimbursements are available for many of these commitments.

Applicants may be nominated by a Washington component or may self nominate. Applications are due September 1, 2026, with the appointment made by the AIAWA board by September 17, 2026.

Full details on responsibilities, time commitment, and application requirements are available [here](#). Questions can be directed to current YAF Regional Director **Rio Namiki** or AIAWA Executive Director **Tammie Sueirro**.

State Board Rep

The Washington State Board for Architects is recruiting to fill a vacant Licensee Member seat. The Board's mission is to protect life, health, and property, and to promote public welfare by licensing and regulating the practice of architecture in Washington. This is a Governor appointed, six year term.

To qualify for the Licensee Member seat, a candidate must be:

- A registered architect
- A resident of Washington state
- Someone with at least eight years of experience in the practice of architecture
- In responsible charge of architectural work or architectural teaching

Board member responsibilities include attending quarterly board meetings and reviewing materials in advance to arrive prepared for agenda discussions, as well as participating in subcommittees and special projects related to board work. Members also assist with licensing exams and the licensing of architects statewide, investigate violations of state regulations related to architecture, recommend rules and regulations for administering licensing laws, and represent the Board to the industry and public.

Are you, or is a colleague you know, interested in serving in this role? Interested candidates can apply directly through the Governor's Boards and Commissions application page. Additional information on the Board, including meeting dates, is available on the Washington State Board for Architects page. Questions can be directed to **Board staff**.



Invest in Your Profession:

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:

Election season is right around the corner, and there has never been a more important time to support the APC. 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.

Seeking Small Firm Exchange Rep

The AIA Small Firm Exchange (SFx) advances the interests of architects practicing in small firms by advocating their value, curating relevant resources, and informing AIA of issues unique to small firm practice. The SFx state representative body includes 53 AIA members nationwide, one per state plus Washington DC, Puerto Rico, and an international practitioner, serving a two year term renewable once for up to four years. Learn more in the **full position description** and apply through your state chapter, or **complete the SFX application** to be alerted when an opening becomes available for Washington. Questions can be directed to AliAlsaleh@aia.org.

Staff



Tammie Sueirro
Executive Director
tsueirro@aiawa.org



Samantha Morrow
Government Affairs Director
smorrow@aiawa.org

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.

2026 Board of Directors

President

Clarissa Easton, AIA—Southwest Washington

President-Elect

Brittany Porter, AIA—Seattle

Past President

Kyle Lepper, AIA—Central Washington

Secretary-Treasurer

Jed Ballew, AIA—Seattle/ Northwest

Osama Quotah, AIA—Seattle

Chris Colley, AIA—Seattle

Jason Bond, AIA—Spokane

Jamie Sandberg, AIA—Southwest Washington

Rio Namiki, AIA, YAF Rep.

Blanca Cazares, Assoc. AIA- Spokane

Noni Becerril, Assoc. AIA, - Central Washington

Myer Harrell, AIAWA, Strategic Councilor