

2025 WFB Legislative Committee Bill Narrative:

Each year, the WFB Legislative Committee compiles a list of priority agricultural related bills for evaluation. The selected bills are explained below with WFB positions and legislative outcomes noted.

SSB 5360 – Environmental Crimes: **Opposed**

SB 5360 applied to the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Hazardous Waste Materials Act with the intention of elevating violations from misdemeanors to felonies, changing civil infractions to criminal offences. The bill replicated federal code at the state level, lacked the protections of individual liability, changed the definitions of ‘knowingly’ and ‘negligent’ in state code, and granted prosecutorial authority to the Attorney General’s Office. The bill passed the Senate 29-20, but died in the House Appropriations Committee.

SHB 1261 – Open Space Incidental Use: **Supported**

Originating from a tax issue in Snohomish County relating to agritourism, this bill had bipartisan support from the start. HB 1261 further clarifies allowable uses on open space land relating to agritourism. The bill also reduces the tax burden from a seven-year lookback to four years when removing land or parcels of property from open space designations to higher uses. The bill passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law.

2ESHB 1462 – Hydrofluorocarbons: **Opposed**

HB 1462 fast tracks the federal government’s goal of reducing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by 15% by 2036 and bans HFC products with Global Warming Potential (GWP) exceeding 1500 by 2030 and HFCs with GWP exceeding 750 by 2033. A task force is included to study the implementation and barriers of converting refrigerant systems to updated ultra-low GWP alternatives to HFCs. The Department of Ecology may grant a temporary exemption, in technically or economically infeasible scenarios. The bill passed the House 59-38 and the Senate 25-23 and was signed by the Governor.

2SHB 1563 – Prescribed Fire Claims: **Supported**

This bill creates a fund to reimburse claims for certain damage and suppression costs from a prescribed fire or cultural burn. The bill decreases the uncertainty associated with prescribed fire and promotes the use of this critical tool for strengthening and protecting resources and communities. The bill passed the House 96-1, the Senate 48-1, and was signed into law.

2SHB 1409 – Clean Fuels Program: **Opposed**

Passage of this bill expedites the implementation of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard program, which will increase fuel costs. A section of the program requiring some in-state liquid biofuel and feedstock production was removed meaning those agricultural products would no longer need to be procured locally. The bill passed the House 54-43, the Senate 25-23, and was signed into law.

SB 5343 – NE WA Wolf-Livestock Management Account: **Supported**

This bill allows sheriffs’ offices in Stevens and Ferry counties to receive grants from the Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Account to aid Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in the management of wolves. The bill passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law.

E2SSB 5284 – Improving Washington’s Solid Waste Management Outcomes: **Opposed**

Although the title is not clear, the biggest impact to agriculture under this bill would be the

recyclable content requirement for plastic packaging. The industry expressed concerns that this packaging is not widely available in commercial markets, and if it can be acquired, it will likely cost more. This bill passed the House 51-45, the Senate 27-21, and was signed into law.

E2ESSB 1912 – Concerning Ag Exempt Fuels Under CCA: **Opposed**

HB 1912 tasks DOE with establishing a website for fuel sellers who offer exempt fuel for agriculture to voluntarily list their locations. Definitions are cited for “agricultural purposes” and “farm fuel user,” as well as added/changed for “motor vehicle fuel” and “special fuel.” Natural gas and kerosene are no longer permanently exempt for agricultural purposes at the point of sale, but are relegated to partial reimbursement under the Department of Licensing Agriculture Support Program. However, the legislature chose to sweep the remaining funds in the account and ended reimbursements on June 2, 2025. Gasoline and propane for agricultural purposes also lose their permanent exemption status, but not until the end of 2029, at which time their only exempt use would be to propel a motor vehicle, such as a forklift. Finally, the temporary exemption for transportation of agricultural products on public highways would be extended for two years. The bill passed the Senate unanimously, the House 94-2, and was signed into law.

ESHB 1644 – Working Minors: **Opposed**

Agriculture was added into this bill late in the legislative session. For employers who utilize youth crews, this bill would include criminal penalties for child labor law violations in agriculture, implement rulemaking for the protection of minors, and increase penalties on a variety of violations. This bill was drafted as the result of an injury of a minor in a different industry and it is unfortunate that agriculture was included without cause. Many people experience their first job in agriculture and this bill could certainly have a chilling effect on the hiring of youth crews. The bill passed the House 60-35, the Senate 37-12 and was signed into law.

ESSB 5041 – Unemployment Insurance Benefits for Striking or Lockout Workers: **Opposed**

Currently, workers are only eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits if they lose their job for no fault of their own. The language that passed changes this presumption and allow striking workers to receive up to six weeks of UI benefits. This will have a significant financial impact on the fund, and potentially all employers who pay into the system. The bill passed the House 51-45, the Senate 27-21, was signed into law.

SB 5525 - Concerning employment loss due to businesses closing or mass layoffs: **Opposed**

This bill creates notice requirements for employers to notify their employees and the Employment Security Department when a business plans to close either permanently or temporarily. Notice requirements change depending on the number of employees and the circumstances surrounding the closure. Additionally, failure to send proper notifications can result in litigation, civil penalties, and/or back wages plus the value of any benefits. This bill passed the House 59-38, the Senate 29-19, and was signed into law.