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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Week 4 Legislative Update

January 27, 2026

Welcome to the third week of the legislative session. The grind is definitely started to wear, folks are drinking more and more caffeine, and little things like "[Potato Day](#)" become extra special.

Amidst all the hustle and bustle, we hope we are keeping our membership informed of the latest happenings in Olympia between the [WACD bill tracker](#), these newsletters, and our new [Legislative Lunches](#),

We hope these emails will be of use and benefit to our members. If there are additional ways WACD can be of service to our membership during session, or want to ask about anything you see in one of these newsletters, all you have to do is pick up the phone or write to [Tom](#), [Heather](#), or [Ryan](#).

1. CD Elections Bill

If this is the first email you are reading this week, [HB 2499](#) the CD elections bill, is scheduled for a bill hearing on Tuesday in the House of Representative's State Government Committee at 1:30 PM. You can watch the committee meeting on [TVW](#). WACD will be testifying in opposition to the bill, based on Resolution 2025-13 adopted at the Annual Meeting. Our talking points include:

- Conservation districts are special purpose districts, created to deliver conservation locally and voluntarily. We have no taxing authority and no regulatory authority.
- Conservation districts already operate under multiple layers of oversight, including:

- The State Conservation Commission (SCC)
- The State Auditor's Office
- Compliance and reporting requirements tied to state and federal grant funding
- HB 2499 would fundamentally change the nature of conservation districts—and the reasons people are willing to serve and to work cooperatively with districts.
- The recent election study did not include analysis of two critical changes proposed in HB 2499:
 - Removing the landowner eligibility requirement to serve as a supervisor
 - Removing the F-1 filing exemption

2. Elections Background

For folks who have newly joined the conservation district world or would appreciate a refresher, the topic of conservation district elections go back to at least 1999 when one change by the Legislature required all conservation districts with an election that year to go on the November ballot. Since then, there have been periodical interest in districts' election process. The most recent push in 2020 led WACD, CDs, and WSCC to develop and adopt the [Joint Committee on Elections](#) with our association-wide priorities on election reform. This was reinforced by the results of a legislative-directed study done by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy into the [costs and benefits](#) of the current election system compared to two proposed alternatives. That report was released at the end of June 2025.

3. Legislative Day Briefing and Training

WACD arranges a Legislative Day each year for districts interested in coming to Olympia during the legislative session. WACD helps out district with meeting materials, arranging appointments, and background information. There is also a briefing at the breakfast on the morning of February 10th.

This year, WACD is hosting a virtual [briefing and training](#) for engaging with legislators and communicating information from 12 - 1 on Tuesday, February 3rd. If you've never met with your legislators before, or want to brush up on those skills, please consider attending. We will be going through the best ways to raise your priorities, share the purpose and value of conservation districts, and be done in 15 minutes.

4. Upcoming Committee Meetings

One common feature in these newsletters will be to identifying opportunities in the committee process we think our membership might to participate or observe on TVW. Here's a few items from the the third week of the legislative session, in addition to the elections bill on Tuesday:

- [HB 2578](#) (Adding tribal members to the fish and wildlife commission.) is being scheduled for a public hearing of the the House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources at 8:00 AM on Wednesday, January 28.
- Also being heard in that committee Wednesday morning at 8:00 AM in the House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources is [HB 2544](#) (Concerning a pilot process for the upper Columbia water rights adjudication.).
- [SB 6104](#) (Protecting agriculture.) is being heard at 1:30 PM on Thursday, January 29th in the Senate Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.
- [HJM 4009](#) (Requesting Congress to ensure that federal wildfire response entities have the capacity to protect communities and infrastructure...) is scheduled for a public hearing at 10:30 AM on Friday, January 30th in the House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

5. Lobbyist Update

One service our lobbyist Brynn Brady provides is coverage of the legislative highlights and trends from the week. From the second week of the legislative session Brynn covers some of the initial wave of retirements, recently revealed details about various tax proposals, and proposals to changing the statutes around initiatives. Check out her write-up on the [WACD HUB](#).

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"American Kestrel" courtesy of [WSCC's Flickr account](#), as a treat for those who reached the bottom of the page.

Taken by Casey Lowder, Pine Creek Conservation District



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