

GOVERNANCE HIERARCHY & OVERSIGHT

Volunteer conservation district supervisors operate at the lowest level of authority within a multi-layered public governance structure.



State of Washington Elected Officials



State Agencies & Auditors Office



County Councils & Commissioners



Conservation District Volunteer Supervisors

Requested Amendment

Exempt unpaid volunteer conservation district supervisors from Statement of Financial Affairs (F-1) reporting under RCW 29B.55.010, while retaining existing campaign disclosure and financial audit requirements.

Request for Relief from F-1 Reporting for Volunteer CD Supervisors

Purpose

Request an amendment to HB 2499 to exempt unpaid volunteer conservation district supervisors from Statement of Financial Affairs (F-1) reporting requirements.

Rationale

Conservation districts lack taxing authority, operate under county and state oversight, and are governed by unpaid volunteer boards. Mandatory F-1 reporting creates a disproportionate compliance burden that risks volunteer recruitment without improving accountability.

Key Policy Points

Existing Oversight

Conservation districts already operate under layered public oversight including county commissioners and state agencies. Volunteer supervisors sit at the lowest level of authority.

Proprietary Disadvantage

Many board members are farmers and F-1 reporting will require them to disclose proprietary information about farm operations which can cause business losses.

Unfunded Mandate

Election cost. Most districts have no independent revenue or taxing authority. F-1 compliance adds administrative cost and complexity to volunteer-run organizations.

Not Comparable to County Officials

County commissioners are paid, levy taxes, and make binding legislative decisions. Volunteer supervisors do not.

Equity Concern

Disclosure requirements should align with compensation, authority, and financial risk.

Proportional Oversight

Disclosure requirements should align with compensation, authority, and financial risk.

Conservation Districts vs. Nonprofit Organizations

This comparison highlights differences in governance, oversight, funding, and disclosure requirements between conservation districts and nonprofit organizations that often receive similar state and federal funding to carry out conservation and natural resource work.

Category	Conservation Districts	Nonprofit Organizations
Legal Status	Governmental subdivisions of the state; created by statute	Private nonprofit corporations
Board Structure	Elected and appointed volunteer supervisors	Appointed boards; often self-perpetuating
Compensation	Unpaid volunteer supervisors	Board members typically unpaid; executives paid
Taxing Authority	None	None
Oversight	County commissioners; state agencies; state auditor; statutory requirements	Grant agreements; internal governance; limited external oversight
Use of Public Funds	State and federal grants; pass-through funding; contracts	State and federal grants; contracts; donations
Financial Audits	Subject to public audit and government accounting standards	Audit requirements vary by grant and size
Election Requirements	Supervisor elections required by statute	No elections required
F-1 (Statement of Financial Affairs) Reporting	Proposed requirement for volunteer supervisors under HB 2499	Not required for nonprofit board members

Equity & Policy Considerations

- Conservation districts are subject to greater public oversight than many nonprofit organizations, yet face additional disclosure requirements for unpaid volunteers.
- Nonprofits receiving comparable levels of public funding are not required to hold elections or file Statements of Financial Affairs.
- Applying heightened disclosure requirements to conservation district volunteers creates an uneven accountability standard.
- Oversight mechanisms should be proportional to authority, compensation, and financial risk.



**CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
OF WASHINGTON STATE**

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