



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – March 8, 2009

*By Heather Hansen, WALP Lobbyist*

As of this writing, we have just passed the half-way mark of the 2009 Legislative Session. The chaos of new bill introductions is behind us. The upheaval of budget cuts is yet to come. It remains to be seen what programs will be affected by budget cuts and what new taxes may be proposed. Given the current budget deficit, it is very unlikely that the goal of no new taxes is a viable option.

The Landscape Architect's Licensing Bill (HB1359 and SB5273), which took so much time and energy last session and over the summer, is moving along smoothly. The new language worked out by WSNLA, WALP, and APLD, along with the landscape architects will allow landscape designers to continue to work without restriction.

There are several bills still active that would benefit the Green Industry:

**SB 5061** creates an endowment to permanently fund a curator for the Washington Park Arboretum Botanic Gardens, which is part of the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources (<http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/index.htm>). The 230-acre Arboretum contains approximately 20,000 trees, shrubs, and vines representing approximately 4,600 different species. It is one of the world's most prestigious plant collections. The curator shall focus on the preservation, maintenance, and presentation of the botanic gardens collections.

The goals of the Washington Park Arboretum are to:

- (1) Enhance public appreciation for the aesthetic diversity of temperate wood plants;
- (2) Educate the public and regional school population about urban landscape use and the natural biology of temperate wood plants;
- (3) Conserve and keep healthy native, exotic, and cultivated woody plants to preserve diversity for future appreciation;
- (4) Maintain and enhance collections, exhibits, and facilities to create the best possible ambiance and visitor experience; and
- (5) Cooperate with local, regional, national, and international entities that have a similar mission.

**SB 5745** requires the State Noxious Weed Board to update its rules to address the spread of noxious weeds by seed, as well as rhizomes and other plant fragments.

**HB 2275** provides a sales tax exemption for propane fuel used in farming, including greenhouse production. If it passes, it will take effect August 1, 2009 and expire July 1, 2019.

Several other bills could be harmful:

**HB 1653** could create new buffer requirements along streams and wetlands that affect agricultural operations.

**HB 1918 / SB 5735** create cap-and-trade systems intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The business community as a whole is concerned that the proposals could dramatically increase the cost of fuel, translating into increased costs for transportation, putting Washington at a competitive disadvantage with other states.

*NOTE: You can track each bill's current status by going to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/> and enter the number of the bill in the space provided.*