



# WMFHA Legislative Update

By [Joe Puckett](#), GAC Chair and [Kathryn Hedrick](#), GAC Lobbyist

Griffey is now officially a Mariner once again. Let's hope that he can put some spirit back in the team and the fans. February 20 was the cutoff date for bills that originated in the House of Representatives. By that date, the bill must have been approved by the committee to which it was assigned or the bill is dead for this session of the legislature. Following is a brief review of the current standing of bills that are of significant interest to the multi-family industry.

HB 1296/ SB 5495: **THIRD PARTY INSPECTIONS.** These bills would prevent a local government from requiring landlords to have their property inspected by a third party as a condition of obtaining a business license. The House version, HB 1296, has passed its first committee vote unanimously and is in the House Rules committee. The Senate version had a hearing on February 11 that went well. Seattle and other local jurisdictions have expressed strong opposition to the bill and we are in negotiations with their representatives seeking an acceptable solution. As of February 22, the status is the same.

HB 1298 / SB 5667: **UTILITY LIENS.** These bills would limit the ability of a local utility to collect unpaid utility bills that a tenant was responsible for but failed to pay. The House version passed its first committee vote and has been sent to the Rules committee. The Senate bill has not been set for a hearing and prospects do not look good for passage of either bill. WMFHA and other landlord groups have been in talks with lobbyists for Seattle and other municipalities in an attempt to find a mutually acceptable compromise.

HB 1856 / SB 5833: **SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY LANDLORD.** These bills would deal with the rare situation in which a landlord or landlord employee sexually assaults or sexually harasses a tenant. Landlord and tenant advocates reached agreement on substitute language and the bill should pass the legislature in a form that is workable for both sides.

HB 1773 / SB 5549: **TERMINATION NOTICES.** These bills would drastically change the termination notices that landlords are required to give to a month-to-month tenant. The bills require a landlord to give a notice 30 days before the end of a month but 60 days if the tenancy has been in effect for more than 1 year. The bills do not require the tenant to give more than the currently allowed 20 day notice. The Senate bill had a hearing on February 11 and we indicated our strong opposition but also expressed a willingness to work with tenant advocates to find a satisfactory middle ground. An idea



that we are exploring is a change in the law so that either a landlord or a tenant could terminate a month-to-month tenancy by giving a notice at least 30 days before the proposed termination date and the termination date could be on any day of the month. We have been successful in the defeat of the House bill.

HB 1333 / SSB 5561: **CARBON MONOXIDE.** The House bill is now dead and the Senate bill has been substantially modified. The modified bill would direct the State Building Code Council to adopt regulations regarding carbon monoxide detectors and require them in new construction beginning no later than January 1, 2011 and in all existing residential buildings no later than January 1, 2013. We continue to have concerns regarding this issue and will be working with legislators to protect the interests of multi-family owners and managers.

HB 1766 / SB 5672: **SOURCE OF INCOME.** These bills would make source of income and Section 8 protected classes in the state and landlords would be required to accept Section 8 tenants if they met other screening requirements. The House bill had a hearing on February 18 and was passed out of committee. The Senate version has a hearing on February 23. WMFHA opposes the bill and we will present our opposition.

HB 1299 / SB 5742: **CRIME FREE PROGRAMS.** These bills impose limitations on any local government that adopts a crime free program for rental housing. One of the most important provisions of the bill is the provision that would require any such program to be voluntary rather than mandatory. The Senate bill had a hearing on February 12 and most of the Senators on the committee seemed to support the bill. The House version is now dead.

SB 5922: **TENANT SCREENING AND EVICTIONS.** This bill is set for a hearing on February 25 and would severely limit the information that screening companies could give to landlords about previously filed eviction actions involving the applicant. It would also allow an applicant to take a screening from one property and use it at other properties for the next 60 days. This is a bad bill and WMFHA will be working extremely hard to kill it.

SB 5923: **INTEREST ON SECURITY DEPOSITS.** This bill would take the interest earned on security deposits that currently goes to landlords and give it to the state for "affordable housing programs." This bill is set for a hearing on February 24. We will be opposing the bill.

The deadline in the Senate for action by the assigned committee is February 25. We may call upon you to contact your legislators to help us advance or kill a particular piece of legislation. We appreciate all the help that you can and will provide. If you want more information about any particular bill, you can go to the legislature website [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov) then click on "bill information" in the left hand column, and then type in the number of the bill that you want to review in the box entitled "search by bill



number."