

## Washington

# Inslee pitches climate change legislation

**By DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee on Wednesday renewed his call for climate change legislation, though Republican lawmakers continue to reject proposals to tax carbon and mandate biofuels as too costly for manufacturers and motorists, and potentially fatal to a transportation plan that depends on a gas tax increase.

Speaking on Earth Day, Inslee said lawmakers have done “zero” for the environment this year. “An absolute goose egg,” he said.

The regular session ended Sunday, but the governor and many lawmakers assumed the Legislature wouldn’t produce a 2015-17 budget by then.

Inslee said legislators can redeem themselves by taking advantage of a special session to pass a carbon-reduction bill.

“We have to act to restrain this existential threat to the state of Washington,” he said.

Neither the Democratic-controlled House nor the GOP-ruled Senate has approved Inslee’s proposal to cap greenhouse gases from some 130 businesses, including one fertilizer plant and eight food processors. The businesses, which emit at least 25,000 metric tons of carbon a year, would have to bid for a limited number of carbon credits to continue operating. The number of credits available would gradually be cut in half by 2050.

The Office of Financial Management estimates the

auctions would cost businesses \$1.2 billion in the first two years, though the agency notes that nobody knows exactly what credits will cost once the bidding starts. “If the auctions generate higher prices than those assumed here, the expenditure impact of the bill could increase substantially,” according to a OFM report.

Lawmakers also haven’t embraced Inslee’s proposal to lower the “carbon intensity” of gasoline and diesel. Supporters and critics of the policy disagree whether promoting ethanol and other biofuels would add a dime or a dollar to a gallon of fuel.

Republican lawmakers say they and their constituents can’t live with the uncertainty, especially when the Senate’s \$15 billion transportation proposal depends on raising the state’s gas tax by 11.7 cents.

“That is the one issue that could kill the whole (transportation) package because the costs are so hard to determine,” said Rep. J.T. Wilcox, R-Yelm.

Sen. John Braun, R-Centralia, said a gas tax increase could be challenged in a referendum. Voters would be influenced by the thought they also will have to pay for more costly biofuels, he said.

“If the low-carbon fuel standard is still in play, that’s going to decisively affect that vote,” he said.

The state gas tax is currently 37.5 cents a gallon. The federal gas tax adds 18.4 cents. Inslee has made climate change his signature issue. He’s instructed the Washington Department of Ecology to write a low-carbon fuel policy that he could enforce by executive order. To discourage



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee speaks on Earth Day, April 22, on the Capitol Campus in Olympia. Inslee says legislators have failed to act to curb carbon emissions, but have a chance to redeem themselves during an upcoming special session.

Inslee from acting alone, the Senate transportation plan includes a provision that would divert transit funds to road projects if he issues an executive order.

## Dept. of Ag collects waste pesticide

**By MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — A line of trucks gathers outside a building on the Washington State Department of Transportation’s Geiger Maintenance Facility. Barrels and tanks holding chemicals farmers don’t or can’t use any more sit in the truck beds.

Inside, workers put tape around the legs of their hazardous material suits, making sure to keep the cuffs outside their boots, so any chemicals don’t accidentally run down their legs into their footwear.

A tarp lies on the ground. Anyone on the tarp needs to wear a suit as he checks the chemicals being turned in to be destroyed.

The disposal program is designed for land-banned pesticides prohibited from use, said Joe Hoffman, waste pesticide program coordinator for the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

“There was nowhere you could take them,” he said. “They can’t go to a landfill and some of them can’t even go to hazardous waste landfills.”

Other materials aren’t used any more as cropping patterns change, and have been aging in barns, or farmers have switched to organic and have no need for chemicals, Hoffman said.

A contractor disposes of the pesticides through thermal destruction, incinerating them at 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit in a rotary kiln. The materials are essentially broken down into their basic element forms, with leftover ash that meets standards going to a hazardous waste landfill or running through the kiln again until it does.

“Something like DDT, that in the environment is extremely persistent (and) doesn’t break down for years, its residence time in that rotary kiln is less than a second,”



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Washington State Department of Agriculture fertilizer compliance manager Brent Perry and a worker check a chemical turned in during the department’s waste pesticide collection event April 22 in Spokane.

### Online

[www.agr.wa.gov/wastepesticide](http://www.agr.wa.gov/wastepesticide)

Hoffman said.

Customers sign a release that makes the department the owner of the material, releasing farmers from long-term liability with hazardous waste, Hoffman said.

“It’s a real asset for the public, not just the farmer,” said Fred Wilcox, who’s been farming since 1947 and now helps his son in the Cheney and Medical Lake, Wash., area. “Most farmers are real environmentally-conscious and they don’t want to be tied up in something that’s going to go on to the next generation,” he said, noting that stockpiling chemicals on the farm becomes a liability for heirs.

Brandon Wagner, a warehouseman for Co-Ag, turned in old product that’s been sitting for several years, left over after the company purchased several sites.

“It would have cost us a lot of money to do this all by our-



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Cheney, Wash., area farmer Fred Wilcox greets Washington State Department of Agriculture pesticide registration services program manager Robin Schoen-Nessa during a waste pesticide collection April 22 in Spokane.

selves,” Wagner said. “Being able to dispose of it for free gets it out of our warehouses. It’s nice to have something like this.”

Sander Carren, production supervisor and safety manager with Wilbur-Ellis in Tekoa, Wash., delivered the program’s 3 millionth pound during the Spokane collection event.

“It’s nothing hazardous, but it needs to be disposed of properly,” Carren said. “This is a good opportunity to do

that. We don’t want this kind of stuff building up at the plant.”

The Spokane event collected 24,984 pounds from 32 customers, Hoffman said. Eight percent of the weight is drum containers, he said.

Hoffman advises farmers to contact the department if they have materials to remove. The department will either put together a collection event in the area or do direct pick-ups in rural areas.

## Rail lines that cater to ag escape oil train tax

Legislation delivered to governor as regular session ends

**By DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — In the nick of time, regional railroads, many of which primarily haul agricultural products, escaped a tax increase.

Shortly before adjourning Friday, the Washington House and Senate agreed on a bill to address an influx of rail cars hauling potentially explosive crude oil from Bakken fields to West Coast refineries.

BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad will pay higher taxes to beef up rail inspections, but short-line railroads that don’t carry crude will be exempted.

“It was a really significant victory for short-line railroads,” said lobbyist Patrick Boss, who represented a coalition of regional rail companies. “That bill was about oil trains. I think the Legislature did the right thing.”

Short-line railroads were included in House Bill 1449 until it was amended just before the Senate approved it 46-0. The House agreed with that and other changes and passed the measure 95-1 a short time later. The bill is ready to be signed by Gov. Jay Inslee, who praised it in a press release.

Passing the bill was the Legislature’s last major action before ending the 2015 regular session. Lawmakers will convene in a special session Wednesday to negotiate 2015-17 operating, capital and transportation budgets.

Agricultural interests got caught up in negotiations as lawmakers worked on a bill to ramp up rail inspections and emergency planning.

“It came down to us communicating to the Legislature, ‘We’re not hauling crude oil. Please amend the bill and take us out of it,’” Boss said.

Farm lobbyists were also concerned about a proposal to require trains carrying hazardous materials, including fertilizer, to increase crew sizes.

Lobbyists said stopping trains at the state line to add crew members would raise transportation costs and cause logistical problems.

The bill that finally passed the Legislature does not require more crew members than mandated by federal law and union contracts.

Some lawmakers said they will reopen the issue next year.

“We are concerned we’re not having that extra set of eyes and extra set of hands in the event we need to do an emergency decoupling of the trains,” said Sen. Christine Rolfes, a Kitsap County Democrat, in a floor speech. “That’s something we hope to come back next session and debate.”

There are 24 rail lines in Washington in addition to BNSF and UP, according to the Washington Department of Transportation.

Oil-hauling railroads will see their taxes increase on intrastate revenues from 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent.

Exempting other rail carriers from the tax increase will not change the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission’s plan to hire eight more rail inspectors, an agency spokeswoman said.

Ramping up WUTC’s safety inspection program will cost more than \$2.8 million over the first two years, according to a report by the Office of Financial Management.

The WUTC has said BNSF and UP pay 90 percent of the intrastate revenue tax. The agency argued that all rail lines will benefit by having more state inspectors.

## Farmworker training bill signed

**By DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Legislation to foster a skilled agricultural workforce was signed Thursday by Washington Gov. Jay Inslee.

House Bill 1127 authorizes the Washington State Department of Commerce to select one organization to receive \$1 million over two years to provide farmworkers with technical and safety training.

The measure doesn’t specify the curriculum or the grant recipient. The bill’s prime sponsor, Yakima County Rep. Bruce Chandler, said he expects several groups to compete for funding and that in the long run growers will pay for the program.

“My vision is that farm work will evolve from being just a job to being a career,” said Chandler, a Republican.

“I believe that in the next generation, agriculture is going to have fewer employees, but they’re actually going to produce more food,” he said. “They

are going to have to have broader and deeper skills.”

Washington Growers League Executive Director Mike Gempler, who attended the bill signing, said his organization hopes to land the contract. The league would collaborate with the Northwest Communications Education Center, which operates a Spanish-language public radio station in Yakima County.

The two groups estimate that over two years they could put about 1,200 workers through short courses on topics such as operating farm machinery, handling pesticides and supervising the workplace.

Gempler said he believes demand for the courses would be high and that agriculture needs a more formal way to develop a well-trained workforce.

“It’s hard for an individual employee to do it on his own,” he said. “We’re very excited that we’re going to have something that can be a focal point for training.”

Gempler said highly skilled workers should command higher wages. “If you have people who can do more, and do it on their own, they’re worth more,” he said.

The education center’s director of special projects, Gilberto Alaniz, said better training will make safer workplaces. “We need to make sure farmworkers have the skills to save lives and prevent injuries,” he said.

The House budget proposal includes funds for the program, while the Senate spending proposal does not. Chandler said he expects the money will be in the final budget worked out between the chambers.

The bill enjoyed support from the United Farm Workers and Columbia Legal Services, which has represented farmworkers in court.

The bill prohibits employers from making the training mandatory. Also, Washington workers must be given priority when an organization enrolls people in courses.

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