



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

April 25, 2012

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia WA 98504-0002

RE: APA Washington Support for Senate Bill 6406

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Thank you for your leadership this past legislative session. On behalf of the Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Washington), I am writing to express our support for the passage of Senate Bill 6406, an important step in reforming state laws governing natural resources and the environment.

This bill would not have happened without the hard work of many legislators, staff and stakeholders who were involved in working through tough issues and crafting a compromise that meets the needs of today's residents and businesses while ensuring our environment is protected for future generations.

While APA Washington has an interest in many of the areas addressed in 6406, this letter focuses on the amendments to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Positive highlights of the changes include:

- A two-part rulemaking process to be conducted by the Department of Ecology to update SEPA categorical exemptions, revise the environmental checklist and further integrate SEPA and the Growth Management Act (GMA).
- To undertake this work, Ecology will convene an advisory group to ensure a wide variety of perspectives are included in the rule-making process. APA Washington is interested in participating in the process given our membership's extensive experience on these topics.
- The bill appropriately supports tailoring the exemptions for cities versus unincorporated lands and for GMA planning counties versus non-GMA counties. It also expands the use of existing upfront planning tools for planned actions and infill developments, and updates the Planning and Environmental Review Fund (PERF) account to allow for both grants and loans to local governments.

Over the last two years, a variety of groups and interests have contributed to making 6406 a better bill, and APA Washington has participated to offer analysis and changes to ensure no loss of existing environmental protections and promotion of sound planning practices.

We understand that you may hear from some who do not support certain elements of 6406 because of concern about the potential effect on major projects like the proposed coal export facility. Our analysis is that 6406 does not alter the state's duty or authority to fully address all relevant impacts under state law.

The bill would not restrict the scope of environmental review under SEPA to evaluate and mitigate air quality and related impacts since "air quality" and "climate" are already specifically listed as elements of the natural environment.

Thank you again for your work to make Washington an even better place to live and work and for your support of this important reform legislation. Please feel free to contact me at ivanmillerseattle@hotmail.com or (206) 94-3858 if you have questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivan Miller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ivan Miller, AICP
Vice-President

CC: Keith Phillips, Senior Policy Advisor
Marty Loesch, Chief of Staff
APA Legislative Committee members