SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 6079

As of January 20, 2026

Title: An act relating to creating a wildfire mitigation grant program.

Brief Description: Creating a wildfire mitigation grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Riccelli, Short, Nobles, Saldaña and Valdez; by request of Insurance Commissioner.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Business, Trade & Economic Development: 1/22/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Strengthen Washington Homes Program (program), administered by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC), to provide financial grants to real property owners, building contractors, and nonprofit organizations for wildfire risk mitigation efforts for insurable dwellings in accordance with specified standards.
- Creates an account for the program in the state treasury and specifies funding sources.
- Prohibits property insurers from using wildfire risk as a disqualifying risk factor for coverage eligibility if a property has a specified designation.
- Authorizes the OIC to conduct pilot projects and adopt rules.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS, TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: John Kim (786-7453)

Background: Wildfire Mitigation and Resiliency Standards Work Group. In 2025, the

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Legislature created a wildfire mitigation and resiliency standards work group (work group) to study and make recommendations on such standards to the Legislature. The work group was co-chaired by the Insurance Commissioner and the Commissioner of Public Lands for the Department of Natural Resources and included members and *ex officio* members from various stakeholder groups.

The Legislature required the work group to develop recommendations in five areas. One area was specified as establishing a grant program to provide grants to Washington homeowners for purposes including, but not limited to, retrofitting residential property to resist loss due to wildfire and evaluating whether residential property meets nationally recognized, science-based, wildfire mitigation standards.

The work group was required to include recommendations for:

- a grant program framework that will promote a decrease in the number of non-renewals of consumer general casualty insurance or property insurance policies; and
- whether and how local fire protection districts may collaborate with the grant program administrator.

The work group published its final report to the Legislature in December 2025. Regarding the grant program, the report concluded there was strong support—22 yes, 7 no, 29 total—for a voluntary grant program with eligibility based on achieving Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) standards, while minority positions in the work group expressed equity concerns and the need for flexible collaboration with local entities.

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner's Existing Accounts. The annual cost of operating the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) is determined by legislative appropriation. A *pro rata* share of the cost, except for the cost of the Insurance Fraud Program, is charged as a regulatory surcharge to specified organizations regulated under the Washington Insurance Code. Each class of organization must contribute a sufficient amount to the OIC's regulatory account to pay the reasonable costs, including overhead, of regulating that class of organization. The regulatory surcharge is calculated separately for each class of organization and is represented by the organization's portion of the receipts collected or received by all organizations within that class on business in this state during the previous calendar year.

Similarly, an annual insurance fraud surcharge is charged to all regulated organizations to fund the annual cost of operating the OIC's Insurance Fraud Program and is deposited in the OIC's fraud account.

Unexpended funds in the OIC's regulatory and fraud accounts at the close of a fiscal year are carried forward to the succeeding fiscal year and are used to reduce future regulatory and insurance fraud surcharges.

Summary of Bill: Strengthen Washington Homes Program. The Strengthen Washington

Homes Program (Program) is established with the stated purpose of providing financial grants to real property owners, building contractors, and nonprofit organizations to assist and promote wildfire risk mitigation efforts for insurable dwellings in accordance with the wildfire prepared standards.

The following terms are defined:

- insurable dwelling means a dwelling located or situated on, or affixed to, residential real estate and includes a single-family or multifamily dwelling, including a modular home;
    1. a modular home means a factory-assembled structure designed primarily for use as a dwelling when connected to the required utilities that include plumbing, heating, and electrical systems contained therein, does not contain its own running gear, and must be mounted on a permanent foundation; and
    2. a modular home does not include a mobile home or manufactured home; and
- wildfire prepared standards means Wildfire Prepared Home and Wildfire Prepared Neighborhood designation standards published by the IBHS or a successor entity.

Any financial grant provided under the Program to mitigate an insurable dwelling is contingent upon the real property owner securing all required permits and applicable inspections in accordance with local building codes as well as a Wildfire Prepared standard or equivalent designation from the IBHS or a successor entity. The Program does not create an entitlement for property owners, building contractors, or nonprofit organizations to obtain funds for, or obligate the state in any way to fund, any activity for which a financial grant is permitted.

Pilot Projects. OIC may conduct localized pilot projects to inform the implementation of the Program. The pilot projects must include identification of the most efficient means of administering the Program, development of the necessary workforce to implement the Program fully, and establishment of the schedule for full implementation.

Strengthen Washington Homes Program Account. The Strengthen Washington Homes Program Account (Account) is created in the state treasury. To the extent funding is available in the Account, the OIC must implement and administer the Program. Moneys in the Account may be spent only after appropriation and expenditures from the Account may be used only for the purposes of the Program. The annual cost of operating the Program is determined by legislative appropriation. Grants and funds received for the purposes of the Program and any legislative appropriations must be deposited into the Account. Any interest earned on money in the Account must remain in the Account.

The OIC may accept any and all donations, bequests, gifts, conveyances, devises, and grants conditional or otherwise; or money, property, service, or other things of value which may be received from the United States or any agency thereof, any governmental agency, institution, person, firm, or corporation, public and private, to be held, used, or applied for the purpose of the program.

The bill authorizes the use of unexpended funds in the OIC's regulatory and fraud accounts at the close of a fiscal year to fund the Account in the succeeding fiscal year, rather than only being used to reduce future regulatory and insurance fraud surcharges.

The bill specifies that the Account is entitled to its proportionate share of earnings of investments of surplus balances in the state treasury's income account based on the Account's average daily balance.

Restriction on Insurer Use of Wildfire Risk as a Disqualifying Risk Factor. An insurer may not use wildfire risk as a disqualifying risk factor for eligibility of property insurance coverage if the property has a current Wildfire Prepared Home, Wildfire Prepared Neighbors, or an equivalent designation from the IBHS or a successor entity.

Rulemaking. The OIC may adopt rules as necessary to implement the Program, including to:

- establish application forms and procedures for obtaining a financial grant;
- specify the eligibility criteria, requirements, and procedures for obtaining a financial grant, which may include, but are not limited to, providing financial grants to:
    1. real property owners to retrofit owner-occupied insurable dwellings;
    2. nonprofit organizations to improve the wildfire resilience of single-family insurable dwellings occupied or owned by low-income and moderate-income individuals; and
    3. governmental entities;
- require that any insurable dwelling wildfire risk mitigation funded by a grant under the Program:
    1. comply with the most recent version of any applicable wildfire prepared standards and specific standards and designations that are applicable to the insurable dwelling; and
    2. be performed by contractors who meet criteria established by the OIC;
- develop procedures and requirements for distributing financial grants; and
- collect the documentation necessary to allow for any auditing of the Program that is required under the terms of a grant or other funds received by the Program.

Short Title. The act created by the bill may be known and cited as the Strengthen Washington Homes Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2026.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.