

2016 Legislative Agenda

Counties play an essential role in keeping Washington's communities safe and secure by preserving public health and well-being, protecting public safety and promoting local economies and resiliency. The Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) has embarked on an initiative in 2016 to strengthen the safety and security of Washington's 39 counties and the people we serve.

Control Cost Drivers

Ensure County Access to Public Employee Benefits Board Programs: Providing adequate and cost-effective health insurance for county employees is a significant challenge. Several counties have been denied access to the benefits provided by the PEBB, despite the fact that county employees are "public" employees. Counties should have access to health insurance benefits through the PEBB.

Legal Notices: The cost of meeting state requirements for providing legal notice are significant. Allow counties to meet legal notice requirements by posting notices on their websites or on a single statewide website.

Liability: Make common-sense amendments to Washington's expansive joint and several liability laws that will save taxpayer dollars.

Provide Adequate Revenue

Protect State Shared Revenue

The loss of county revenue from prior state cuts means that state shared revenues are more important to counties than ever before. Protecting these fund sources is critical.

Revenue Flexibility

Permit Fee Flexibility: Counties have no dedicated fund source for mandated planning and code compliance activities, yet both are necessary to support economic and population growth in our communities. Allow building permit fees to be used to pay for long range planning and code compliance.

New Revenue

Limit Property Tax Revenue Growth to Inflation and Population: Property taxes are counties' top revenue source, comprising approximately 60% of general fund revenue, but are capped at a level that doesn't keep up with costs. Property tax growth should be limited to inflation and population growth.



50% of county general fund revenues are derived from property tax – by far our largest revenue source



\$20 Max
Annual Impact

The maximum annual impact to the average homeowner in the City of Bellevue from an additional 1% increase would be \$20.

2016 Legislative Agenda

Other Critical Issues

Allow Penalties from Discover Pass Violations to Pay for Court Costs: Current law directs all penalty revenue to State Parks, despite the fact that after the violation is written, the cost of judicial administration occurs at the county level. There is a disincentive for counties to pursue enforcement of this unfunded activity.

Adequate and Sustainable Local Public Health Funding: Washington's local public health system is in a very fragile position after years of funding reductions at all levels. Just as the work of public health requires many governmental and community partnerships, adequately funding the system must also be a shared responsibility between the State and local governments to ensure a consistent level of public health protection statewide.

Full Funding for DFW PILT Payments: Provide the Department of Fish and Wildlife with the resources to make full payments in lieu of taxes to counties.

Infrastructure Funding for Water Projects: Provide infrastructure funding in the capital budget for water supply, stormwater, flood control and other water projects.

WSAC Policy Staff

Eric Johnson
Executive Director
(360) 489-3013
ejohnson@wsac.org

Josh Weiss
Director, Policy and Legislative Relations
(360) 489-3015
jweiss@wsac.org

Brian Enslow
Senior Policy Director
(360) 489-3012
benslow@wsac.org

Laura Berg
Policy Director
(360) 489-3024
lberg@wsac.org

Axel Swanson
Research Director
(360) 489-3021
aswanson@wsac.org

Gary Rowe - Managing Director,
Washington State Association of County Engineers
(360) 489-3014
growe@wsac.org

Brad Banks - Managing Director,
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
(360) 489-3011
bbanks@wsac.org

Jennifer Ziegler
Policy Consultant
(360) 790-6089
jennifer@zieglervgov.com



Safe, Livable Washington