Restored Revenue Authority Focus of Major Bipartisan Effort
Bipartisan Bill Seeks to Give Local Control Back to Communities Across Washington

Olympia, WA (January 30, 2017) – Representative Kristine Lytton (D-Anacortes) and Representative John Koster (R-Arlington) introduced House Bill 1764 that would replace the arbitrary 1% revenue cap currently limiting county and city revenue collection with a cap tied to a factor of inflation plus the rate of population growth—the actual factors that drive costs. Additional bill sponsors include Representatives Springer (D-Kirkland), Nealey (R-Walla Walla), Senn (D-Bellevue) and Harris (R-Vancouver).

“Our local communities have serious public safety and other concerns that put working families at risk. I’m proud to shine a light on this important issue by creating a path to additional funding for public safety and human services with our local counties,” said Representative Lytton.

“Times have changed and issues have intensified since the one-percent limit was enacted. Local governments are struggling with issues such as homelessness, law and justice costs, mental health, opioid abuse and more. The Legislature continues to pile on unfunded mandates, and our cities and counties just don’t have the tools available to address essential services,” said Representative Koster. “This legislation is intended to give local governments a seat at the table during the budgeting process and to open a dialogue about available options to meet their needs.”

“We are appreciative for the support and leadership Representatives Lytton and Koster have provided so this issue can be addressed this session,” said Obie O’Brien, Kittitas County Commissioner and President of the Washington State Association of Counties. “Washington counties and cities are struggling to fund important public safety services. This bill is a significant step in giving local officials local options to keep their communities and residents safe.”

Over the last decade, keeping Washingtonians safe has become a nearly insurmountable challenge. Counties’ cost of providing essential public services rises 3-5% every year, while revenue collection remains flat, due largely to the 1% cap on property tax enacted by legislature in 2002.

To keep up with this crisis, counties have taken extreme measures to cut costs—reducing workforce, tapping cash reserves, implementing furloughs, diverting funds from road to operations, cutting programs and services—but these actions have not and cannot address the underlying problem of the 1% property tax cap, which makes up the majority of a county’s general fund revenue.
Due to a lack of funding, counties and cities across the state have experienced:

- Reduced deputies on the road
- Delayed criminal justice proceedings
- Delayed public safety response times
- Arbitrary caps on the number of inmates booked into county jails and fewer inmates completing their sentences
- Cuts to law enforcement training
- Structurally deficient or functionally obsolete county bridges

“The citizens of Washington deserve the best that we can give them in regards to public safety and service,” said Cowlitz County Sheriff Mark Nelson. “The support of the legislature will go a long way in showing our citizens that public safety and the overall welfare of our people as provided throughout our counties is a high priority.”

For additional information or for questions, please contact Derek Anderson, Director of Communications and Member Services for the Washington State Association of Counties, at (360) 489-3020 or danderson@wasc.org.

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