



Washington State  
Association of Counties  
*The Voice of Washington Counties*

2018 Legislative Session

# Legislative Priorities

## Justice, Health & Safety for all Washingtonians

*Counties play an essential role in keeping Washington residents safe and secure by preserving public health and well-being, protecting public safety, and safeguarding justice. Enactment of the Washington State Association of Counties' 2018 Legislative priorities will help counties sustain the basic government services that ensure justice, and protect the health and safety of all Washington citizens.*

"The state must invest significant, targeted funding in our public defense systems."

—2007 Status Report on Public Defense in Washington State



### Adequate Funding for Indigent Defense

Access to a defense attorney in criminal matters is a basic constitutional right, that counties were assigned by the Legislature. Yet, the state funds less than 5% of the cost for these services. Counties currently spend approximately \$137 million annually with the state providing only \$5 million to cities and counties.

**For effective access to justice, the Legislature must fund the full cost of indigent defense services: \$137 million additional per fiscal year.**



### Foundational Public Health Services

Providing public health services is a shared state and local responsibility. Some public health services are so critical that they must be provided to every resident of Washington State. Other public health needs may be unique to certain regions of our state, so each community determines and implements local priorities. The Foundational Public Health Services model ensures all residents can depend on a core set of services which only governmental public health can provide.

**Support Foundational Public Health Services funding for local health jurisdictions to assure that the system is able to respond to public health threats.**



### Local Government Property Tax Revenue

Property taxes are counties' top revenue source, comprising approximately 50% of general fund revenue. Property taxes are capped and can't keep up with growing costs. Public safety and criminal justice services make up about 75% of counties' total general fund expenditures. Thus, property taxes are inextricably tied to justice, health and safety for Washington citizens.

**Protect citizens' access to justice, health and safety by tying property tax revenue growth to inflation and population (the factors that cause costs to grow) so that counties aren't forced to make dangerous cuts to core governmental services.**



### Rural Water Solutions

Counties are asking for a laser focused fix, a workable solution for *Hirst*. Washington's 39 counties want to provide the State and citizens a path forward before more value is lost on property across the state. The Legislature needs to provide clarity and cause no more harm to counties by providing a legislative solution.

**The Legislature must restore counties ability to rely on Ecology's rules for land use planning and permitting.**

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