



2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Unfunded Mandates



What is an ‘Unfunded Mandate’?

Counties play an essential role in keeping Washington residents safe and secure by preserving public health and well-being, protecting public safety, and safeguarding the civil and criminal justice system.

Washington’s counties are committed to working with the Legislature to find a way to serve all the residents of the state.

County revenues are simply not keeping pace with the cost of normal inflation and population growth. In comparison with cities and the state, county revenue growth lags significantly behind.

UNFUNDED MANDATE

WSAC’s Definition:

A true unfunded mandate is any instance where the Legislature, the courts or other agencies take action that increases the costs of running county government without compensation for the new legal requirements.

UNFUNDED MANDATE REFORM

RCW 43.135.060

In 1993, the citizens of Washington State passed Initiative 601 that, in addition to establishing state spending limits, created a requirement that local governments must be reimbursed by the state for the costs of any new programs or increased services imposed on them.

The state continues to pass legislation that increases costs for counties, refuses to adequately fund the constitutionally and statutorily required county services, and allows state agencies to adopt costly regulations, or avoid paying their fair share.

Counties, as agents of Washington state, are tasked with implementing laws and court mandates on behalf of the state of Washington. Therefore, the Legislature must ensure that counties have adequate resources to perform these constitutional and statutory responsibilities.

Examples of unfunded mandates from the Legislature are:

- Trial Court Public Defense
- Election Costs
- Building and Servicing Ballot Drop Boxes
- Court Costs
- Public Health Services
- Public Safety Regulations

The Washington State Legislature has continued to shift costs through policy changes without addressing the underlying funding problems that face county budgets. However, it is not only the Legislature that shifts costs down to counties. Other state agencies and the courts changing rules, regulations and internal policies affect county budget’s bottom line.

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