



WASHINGTON  
STATE ASSOCIATION  
of **COUNTIES**

2023-24 WASHINGTON STATE  
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

# Annual Report



# Who We Are

## The Voice of Washington Counties

Created in 1906, the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) serves the counties of Washington State. Members include elected county commissioners, councilmembers, and executives from all of Washington's 39 counties. WSAC provides a variety of services to its member counties, including advocacy, professional development, public-private business partnerships, and a forum to network and share best practices.

While voting within the organization is limited to county commissioners, council members, and county executives, WSAC also serves as an umbrella organization for affiliate organizations representing:

- County Road Engineers
- Local Public Health Officials
- County Administrators
- Solid Waste Managers
- County Human Service Administrators
- IT Directors
- Planning Directors
- Clerks of County Boards

WSAC also works closely with its sister organization, the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO), which serves independently elected non-judicial county officials, including assessors, auditors, treasurers, prosecutors, coroners, clerks, and sheriffs.

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# Member Engagement



**38/39**  
counties are  
active members  
of WSAC and  
NACo



**3**  
presidential  
leadership  
appointments  
to NACo  
committees,  
caucuses, and  
task forces



**60**  
**WSAC Member Meetings**

- 4 Board Meetings
- 12 Legislative Steering Committee Meetings
- 22 Congressional Delegation Meetings
- 22 Virtual Assemblies



**100%**  
of counties were  
represented  
at the 2023  
**County Leaders Conference**

# Communications & Member Services

The Communications and Member Services division is responsible for strategic communications, education, networking, member services, and events.

## 2023-24 Key Accomplishments

- **Email Rebranding**  
Redesigned weekly newsletter and rebranded as WAcounities Weekly to provide you with more information to stay updated on current issues.
- **Quarterly Email Reminder**  
Created WAcounities Quarterly to remind you of the benefits WSAC has to offer and highlight key dates for upcoming training and events.
- **Association Management System**  
Launched The Hub platform as a new tool for members to access news, meeting resources, register for events and connect with others.



Facebook

2,931 page likes



X (Twitter)

1,969 followers



LinkedIn

1,113 followers



Instagram

762 followers



Meetings

22 Virtual  
Assemblies

34 Hybrid Meetings



Website

226,349  
page views

154,526  
website visitors

# Advocacy

**LSC members  
met bi-weekly in Olympia**



**During the 2024  
legislative session 1,193  
bills were introduced;**



**380**  
passed the  
legislature



**6**  
were  
vetoed  
in part  
by the  
governor



**60**  
Day  
legislative  
session

# Legislative Affairs

The 2024 legislative session was a precursor to a major election season and also featured six controversial initiatives regarding modifying police vehicular pursuits, repealing the Climate Commitment Act, repealing the state's long-term care insurance program, repealing the capital gains tax, prohibiting an income tax, and parental rights in public education. The legislature adopted three of the initiatives, leaving the voters to decide about repeals to the Climate Commitment Act, the state's long-term care insurance program, and the capital gains tax.

## 2024 Bill Outcomes and Budget

### GENERAL GOVERNMENT



#### Tort Liability & Risk Management

**SB 5059** would have applied prejudgment interest to tort judgments, substantially impacting county risk pools and insurance availability.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 1445** would have authorized the Attorney General to investigate and sue local agencies over alleged law enforcement legal violations.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 1025** would have applied vicarious liability to local agencies for police misconduct.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**



#### Taxes

**HB 1818** exempts the sale or transfer of designated forestland to a governmental entity if the land is managed for commercial timber harvest from the designated forestland compensating tax.

WSAC Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2276** would have added an additional tax to the sale of real estate over \$3 million. It also decreased the tax rate for property sales under \$750,000.

WSAC Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 5770** would have replaced the current 1% annual property tax growth limit with a new annual limit based on inflation, not to exceed 3%.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT (CONTINUED)



### Elections

**SB 6156/HB 2250** would have implemented a system for ranked-choice voting.

WSAC Position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 1932** would have allowed some elections to be moved to even-numbered years.

WSAC Position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**



### Employment & Labor

**SB 5793** will expand the availability and use of sick leave for employees under certain circumstances.

WSAC Position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 1983** would have allowed striking workers to receive unemployment benefits.

WSAC Position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**



### Public Works Procurement

**SB 6040** requires the Capital Projects Advisory Review Board to review how well prompt pay provisions are working for small businesses, particularly women and minority-owned businesses, potential improvements that could be considered, and the potential impacts on the industry any recommendations might have.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 5133** would have added to apprenticeship utilization criteria contractors must meet to qualify as responsive bidders on public works projects.

WSAC Position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**



### Administration

**HB 1870** assists local communities with technical assistance and matching funds in developing applications for federal funding.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**



### Budget Highlights

**\$24 million** for grants to adapt to climate change, increase energy efficiency, and develop the advanced workforce of the future.

**\$50 million** for grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in vulnerable and overburdened communities.

**\$45 million** for clean building performance grants for tier 1 covered buildings and public buildings.

**\$4 million** for grants for energy performance audits.

**\$24 million** for the state's share of election costs.

**\$5 million** for assistance in accessing federal tax incentives and grants.



## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE



### Transportation & Infrastructure

**HB 2384** expands local authority to utilize automated traffic safety cameras.

WSACE position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2451** would have limited the amount counties can increase impact fees to the Consumer Price Index, impeding our ability to pay for Capital Facilities Plan projects.

WSACE position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6285** would have arbitrarily capped the amount of impact fees paid for any one project at 50% and included a new requirement that fees be spent within five years instead of ten.

WSACE position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 2051** aimed to reduce emissions from small off-road engines.

WSACE position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**



### Budget Highlights

**New language** extending the Federal Fund Exchange Pilot Program through the 2025-27 biennium.

**New language** adjusting the County Road Administration Board's budget allows for the hire of a Federal Fund Facilitator position.

**\$27.2 million** additional for Safe Routes to Schools grants.

**\$18.5 million** additional for Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety grants.

**\$1.5 million** from the State General Fund for Commerce to provide technical assistance to grantees of federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment grants.

**\$375 thousand** for the Joint Transportation Committee to contract with the Municipal Research and Services Center to convene a project delivery streamlining work group to review streamlining options and recommend practices that support expedited project delivery.

**\$150 thousand** for WSDOT Local Programs to fund an environmental liaison position within the multiagency permit program.

# HOUSING



## Housing

**HB 2126/SB 6029** would have authorized counties to allow detached accessory dwelling units outside urban growth areas.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 2464** would have allowed counties to site new mobile and manufactured home communities outside urban growth areas. It would have also required counties to allow the siting of new or used manufactured or mobile homes or park model trailers on any open lot within an existing park unless it violates health and safety standards.

WSAC position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6015** implements restrictions on how local governments can regulate off-street parking for residential development.

WSAC position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 1998** requires counties to allow co-living housing development on any residential lot zoned for multifamily housing of at least six units per lot.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 6173** expanded eligible uses of the existing local option sales tax for affordable housing to include projects serving up to 80% AMI if the project is developing units for owner occupancy.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 1987** clarifies that funds from the rural counties sales and use tax for public facilities (.09 tax) can be used for affordable workforce housing that is not publicly owned.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 5334** would have allowed counties to levy a new local option excise tax on short-term rentals to be used for affordable housing development and homelessness alleviation.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**



## Budget Highlights

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**\$600 thousand** for Commerce to provide technical assistance in planning for and siting supportive and emergency housing services.

**\$180.663 million** for the new construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation of affordable housing projects for low-income and special needs populations.

**\$100 million** for the Apple Health and Homes rapid permanent supportive housing program.

**\$20 million** to acquire, renovate, and prepare real property for rapid conversion into enhanced emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, youth housing, tiny homes, or shelters.

**\$34 million** to backfill the shortfall in document recording fees.

**\$44 million** for affordable housing for low-income people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

**\$25 million** for affordable housing preservation projects.

**\$60 million** to develop home ownership projects that are affordable for first-time low-income households.

**\$4 million** in increased funding for long-term rental subsidies for those with a mental health or substance use disorder (SUD).

**\$23.688 million** for housing assistance, with priority given to those with a mental health disorder, SUD, or other complex conditions.

**\$150 million** for public and private electric utility bill credits for moderate and low-income families.



## NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, & LAND USE



### Growth Management

**SB 6140** allows increased flexibility for certain kinds of commercial retail and services in certain areas designated as limited areas of more intensive rural development under the state's Growth Management Act.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 6143** would have required the Department of Commerce to consult with the Department of Fish and Wildlife in adopting conservation and restoration guidelines for preserving and enhancing anadromous fisheries. Counties would have been required to implement the guidelines in their critical area protection regulations.

WSAC position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6120** delays requirements in RCW 19.27.560 to implement certain sections of the International Wildland Urban Interface Code until the Department of Natural Resources creates a statewide wildfire hazard map and a base-level wildfire risk map for each county.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2113** would have required counties to submit any changes and updates to their local housing development regulations to the Department of Commerce for approval before enactment.

WSAC position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 2296** extends the mandatory periodic update for county comprehensive land use plans deadline by six months for 2025 updates.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 5834** authorizes counties to adjust urban growth area boundaries annually if the overall size and development capacity isn't expanded.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2070/SB 5990** would have expanded the State Environmental Policy Act review process to include a separate checklist and findings for considering environmental justice impacts.

WSAC position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**



### Water

**HB 2105** would have replaced the "overriding consideration of public interest" exemption for issuing new water rights in basins with unmet minimum instream flows with a new exemption based on mitigation measures.

WSAC position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 5517** would have implemented certain recommendations from the joint legislative task force on water mitigation, including authorizing out-of-kind mitigation for new water rights under certain circumstances.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**





## Solid Waste Management

**HB 2049/SB 6005** would have created an extended producer responsibility program for paper and packaging products.

WSAC position: **CONCERNS** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 2144** would have created a deposit return program for qualifying beverage containers.

WSAC position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 2207** changes the status of littering to a civil infraction and imposes significant infraction costs:

WSAC position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2301** implements strategies for diverting organic material and decreasing food waste through sustainable food management policies and makes changes to the organic materials management requirements in RCW 70A.205.

WSAC position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**



## Budget Highlights

Text changes to the Water Banking Pilot Program, increasing the grant limits and expanding eligibility for certain counties.

**\$15 million** for replacing encumbered State Forestlands and conserving structurally complex, carbon-dense forested state trust lands in certain counties.

An additional **\$10 million** for assisting local governments in meeting obligations for adding climate change considerations to local comprehensive land use plans.

**\$250 thousand** for the Department of Commerce to convene a task force to recommend strategies for integrating special purpose districts into the Growth Management Act planning process.

**\$2 million** for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to reduce severe wildfire risk on WDFW-owned lands.

## PUBLIC HEALTH



### Public Health

**SB 5983** allows for medical assistants to provide syphilis treatment under telemedicine supervision and expands access to expedited partner therapy – both important strategies to reduce the burden of STIs in our state. This was a WSALPHO-sponsored bill.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 6110** would have provided important updates to local child fatality review statutes. These reviews are used to identify community strategies that can prevent further death and injury for our youth. Updates would have included increasing the youth age to 19 years, aligning privacy and confidentiality to national standards, and emphasizing coordination between local and state agencies. This was a WSALPHO-sponsored bill.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 5940** creates a medical assistant-emergency medical technician certification. This change would allow EMTs to continue to provide certain types of medical care once they reach a hospital with a patient. For rural hospitals struggling to fill staff positions, this is a creative solution to help fill gaps.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 1608** provides a statewide standing order for school districts to be able to purchase and maintain a supply of epinephrine injectors (epi-pens) for schools and school nurses. This reduces the cost and increases critical medicine's presence in a severe allergic reaction or similar life-threatening event.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 6095** authorizes the Secretary of Health to issue a prescription standing order to control, treat, or mitigate a public health disease or threat. Under this new policy, a local health officer's standing orders would not be pre-empted, and the Secretary must consult local health officers before issuing any standing order.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**



## Budget Highlights

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**\$750 thousand** to the State Board of Health to convene an advisory group of school and public health partners to assess current school environmental health rules and identify critical rule updates.

**\$1.5 million** for the Emergency Rapid Response Program, providing immediate community relief grants in response to natural and manmade disasters.

**\$1.5 million** to implement an extreme weather event community grant program.

**\$724 thousand** for the State Military Department to continue support for current response and recovery efforts.

**\$1 million** to create the Clean Water Rapid Response Program that supports drinking water testing and emergency water supplies, focusing on overburdened and vulnerable communities facing threats to safe drinking water.

**\$5.05 million** for PFAS treatment and mitigation in wells and water supply systems.

**\$304 thousand** is provided to implement environmental justice projects in communities in existing health equity zones.

**\$500 thousand** to expand the school-based health center program to an additional five schools.

**\$2.1 million** capital investments to improve facilities for eight existing school health centers.



## OPIOID RESPONSE



### Opioid Response

**HB 1956** and **SB 5906** direct the Department of Health to develop and implement a statewide drug overdose campaign; **HB 1956** further directs OSPI to include substance use prevention materials for school and classroom use and include opioid education as part of middle and high school health curriculum. **SB 5906** also requires DOH to conduct a feasibility study for an opioid overdose prevention hotline.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 5804** requires that all school districts, regardless of student population, obtain and maintain opioid reversal medication in each of its schools.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2112** requires all higher education institutions to provide opioid and fentanyl prevention to its students, make naloxone and fentanyl test strips available to students, and require training on administering naloxone to residence hall staff.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2396** requires the DOH to compile resources related to decontaminating vehicles from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids and requires jails to provide information about the availability of substance use disorder treatment to persons being released from jail.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**



### Budget Highlights

**\$3.4 million** to school districts, community organizations, local health jurisdictions, and other behavioral health agencies to implement opioid prevention and harm reduction education.

**\$6 million** for increased naloxone access, including dedicated stockpiles for first responders like EMT and fire departments and larger state distribution programs.

**\$3.7 million** is provided to fund **five local pilot programs** to provide medical, behavioral health, and SUD assessments for people living in homeless encampments.

**\$3 million** to add five more health engagement hubs by the end of 2027. Hubs are an all-in-one model of care where adults who use drugs can access medical, harm reduction, social services, and other referrals.

**\$900 thousand** for the HealthCare Authority to pilot 20 public health vending machines in jails, behavioral health organizations, local health departments, and harm reduction programs. Machines will contain naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and other public health supplies.

**\$5.3 million** for drug awareness, prevention, and education campaigns, emphasizing opioids and fentanyl. **\$2.75 million** of this is dedicated to local health jurisdictions, including developing and implementing a model prevention toolkit.

Over **\$21 million** for enhanced and expanded opioid treatment, including rapid methadone treatment in healthcare, long-acting MOU, MOUD in jails, mobile treatment pilots, the Opioid Recovery and Care Center, and Capital Budget treatment expansion grants.



# PUBLIC SAFETY & HUMAN SERVICES



## Resentencing

**HB 1396:** Required the sentencing court to impose a maximum term of life imprisonment and a minimum term of total confinement of no less than 25 years for Aggravated Murder in the first degree if the offense was committed at age 18 to 20 and certain mitigating factors of youthfulness apply, or to impose life imprisonment without parole instead if those factors do not apply. It also required resentencing for anyone sentenced before May 1, 2024, to life imprisonment without parole for an offense between 18 and 20.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6063:** Required resentencing hearings for persistent offenders with an underlying conviction for a most serious offense committed before the person turned 18.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**2SHB 2001:** Established a process for certain persons convicted of a felony to petition the sentencing court to modify the original sentence upon meeting specific eligibility criteria, among other things. This would have required counties to conduct resentencing hearings.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

**E2SHB 2065:** Allowed a person sentenced for an offense committed before July 23, 2023, whose offender score was increased due to juvenile adjudications which are not scorable under current law to petition for a resentencing hearing if the person is currently incarcerated in total confinement and other restrictions apply.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**



## Additional Corrections Officer Training Classes

Counties supported the Criminal Justice Training Commission's (CJTC) request to add two additional corrections officer academy (COA) classes in FY24 and four additional classes in FY25, and thereafter. As of January 2024, there were 237 corrections officers on the waitlist to get into the COA with a wait time of 12-24 months.

County jails are facing correction officer recruitment and retention difficulties. Exacerbating this issue is that once hired, corrections officers cannot complete the required COA courses within the mandated period. So, even if a county

can hire a corrections officer, they must wait a minimum of up to 12 months, unless otherwise waived by CJTC, before that person is trained and able to work. Based on the CJTC's estimates, it needs a total of 13 COA classes to alleviate the waitlist completely and 7 COA classes to simply keep up with the applications it receives.

WSAC commenced a lobbying effort to request classes sufficient to totally eliminate the current waitlist – one additional class in FY24 and nine additional classes in FY25 – rather than merely the two classes in FY24 and four additional classes in FY25. Ultimately, the final conference budget included one additional COA class in FY24 and nine additional COA classes in FY25.

## PUBLIC SAFETY & HUMAN SERVICES (CONTINUED)



### Other

**SHB 1916:** Provides that for purposes of funding, a child is considered to have received Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) services if the child received services within the same month as the monthly county day, rather than the month prior. It requires the monthly count day for ESIT enrollment to fall on the last business day of the month.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**HB 2211:** Provided a county legislative authority until January 1, 2027, to impose a criminal justice sales and use tax without voter approval. Provided a city within a county that has not imposed the sales and use tax at the full rate by July 1, 2024, until January 1, 2027, to legislatively impose the remainder of the tax up to the full rate. Added co-responder and diversion treatment services to the definition of criminal justice purposes for which a second sales and use tax could be used.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6079:** Allows the records of a person confined in a juvenile detention facility to be made available to managed care organizations and behavioral health administrative services organizations for care coordination activities.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 6242:** Removed the requirement that law enforcement agencies reimburse the CJTC for 25 percent of training costs. (FUNDING PROVIDED IN BUDGET ANYWAY)

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**HB 1925:** Required the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to provide information to recently discharged veterans about benefits, services, and resources available to them in each county. Expanded county eligibility for the WDVA Veterans Service Officer Program.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**





## Budget Highlights

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**\$484 thousand in FY24 and \$1.169 million** in FY25 for funding to provide 1 additional COA class at the CJTC in FY24 and 9 additional COA classes in FY25.

**\$1.747 million** is provided for (1) defense and prosecutor internships with monthly compensation and housing stipends in addition to partial reimbursement for the supervising attorney in underserved and rural areas and (2) defense and prosecutor training in support of 2SSB 5780.

**\$270 thousand** for a study to examine jail rates to recover local government costs of housing individuals under the Department of Corrections jurisdiction who have violated conditions of supervision.

**\$4.446 million** for the State to cover the previously required local government portion of the training costs for basic law enforcement academy (BLEA).

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is directed to submit a forecast of the caseload of individuals anticipated to utilize supported employment and community inclusion services to inform operating budget development for the 25-27 fiscal biennium and other data.



# 2024 Legislative Priorities

At the end of the 2023 session, WSAC members found themselves in a welcome but unusual situation, having accomplished all four of their adopted legislative priorities. The Legislative Steering Committee met in the fall and considered adopting additional priorities for 2024. Ultimately, the committee opted to forgo additional priorities. Instead, it chose to concentrate its efforts on increasing legislative awareness and understanding of public defense and behavioral health issues. The committee also adopted positions on specific issues anticipated to be considered during the 2024 session.



## Equal Access to Justice – the Public Defense System

The absence of state revenue for such an obvious state mandate delegated to counties leaves counties with no option but to cut from other public health and safety services provided to our shared communities. Counties support increased state funding for trial court public defense.

### OUTCOMES

**HB 2202** would have created a state indigent defense and law enforcement assistance account in the state treasury. The revenues would be distributed to local governments as financial assistance to support law enforcement and public defense services. (No hearing)

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**2SSB 5780** creates a law student rural defense program via the Office of Public Defense (OPD) and a law student rural prosecution program via the CJTC. It also expands the criminal defense and prosecution training capacity at OPD and CJTC.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

**SB 5781** would have created a law student rural defense program via OPD.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 5782** would have required a study of the indigent defense system by the 6th Amendment Center. (No hearing)

WSAC Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 6142** would have required counties to provide equal amounts of funding to both prosecutors and defense attorneys. Any cost increases for public defense costs above expenditures on the bill's effective date would be paid out of the State general fund. (No hearing)

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

**SB 5773** would have provided cities and counties money for public defense, ramping up to 50% state funding by 2028. (No hearing)

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**





## Taking on the Behavioral Health Crisis

Counties are on the front line of Washington's behavioral health crisis. Our state has a shortage of mental health providers and a high demand for treatment. Counties need help to deliver what is needed most by some of our most vulnerable residents.

### OUTCOMES

**1115 Waiver** - Counties supported an effort to ensure that the legislature approved implementing the 1115 waiver for up to 90 days, rather than the previously approved 30 days, for Medicaid benefits in detention facilities. This approval was successfully included in the state's final budget.



## County Revenue Enhancement & Flexibility

Counties support policies to increase and diversify county revenues and local flexibility in resource utilization. Statewide policies to eliminate or exempt fees and taxes should not impact local revenues.

### OUTCOMES

**SB 5770** would have replaced the current 1% annual property tax growth cap with a new limit based on annual inflation, plus any banked inflation balance, not to exceed 3%. This bill also removed the non-supplant language that applies to counties with a population of 1.5 million or more in the existing statute.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**



## Investments in Fish Barrier Removal

Counties need financial assistance to advance goals for salmon recovery by replacing fish barriers.

### OUTCOMES

An additional **\$22 million** supplemental State Capital Budget appropriation for the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board project list. If the Climate Commitment Act is repealed, the appropriation is null and void.

An additional **\$25 million** supplemental State Capital Budget appropriation for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. If the Climate Commitment Act is repealed, the appropriation is null and void.



## Housing

Counties support state investment in infrastructure that supports housing development and resources to assist local government in streamlining permitting systems and processes.

### OUTCOMES

None.



## Study to Assess Septage Treatment Capacity

Counties support one-time funding to study septage treatment capacity.

### OUTCOMES

**\$250 thousand** is appropriated in the supplemental State Capital Budget for WSALPHO to conduct a statewide septage treatment assessment and capacity study.



## Broadband

Counties need funding to support local project planning, business development services, and stakeholder and partner engagement for broadband.

### OUTCOMES

**\$1.5 million** is provided in the supplemental State Operating Budget for Commerce to provide technical assistance to grantees of federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) grant funding.



## Public Records Act Reforms

Counties support working with stakeholders to reduce abusive public records requests and litigation.

### OUTCOMES

**HB 2037** would have protected local governments from vexatious lawsuits associated with public records requests, providing more opportunities to correct mistakes and fully provide records while discouraging litigation and legal fees.

WSAC Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**



## Additional Corrections Officer Training Classes

Counties supported the Criminal Justice Training Commission's request to add two additional corrections officer academy (COA) classes in FY 24 and four additional classes in FY 25, and thereafter.

### OUTCOMES

The supplemental State Operating Budget includes funding for one additional COA class in FY 24 and nine additional COA classes in FY 25.



## Fully Fund All New County Responsibilities and Stabilize Existing Support

Counties support state action, ensuring adequate resources for all new and existing requirements resulting from legislation.

### OUTCOMES

Unfortunately, bills WSAC considers as unfunded mandates were passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. They include:

**HB 1998** requires counties to update their development regulations to allow co-living housing units. **County costs: \$672 thousand.**

**SB 6015** requires counties to update their development regulations to meet new statewide limitations on residential off-street parking requirements. **County costs: \$840 thousand.**

# Counties Coastal Caucus

The Washington State Association of Counties created the Coastal Counties Caucus, comprised of 14 counties bordering Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Pacific Ocean shortly before the creation of the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) in 2007. The Caucus creates a forum for Counties to interact, engage, and recommend WSAC positions on issues relating to the waters of Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and the Pacific Ocean. The program also supports members of the Puget Sound Partnership's Ecosystem Coordination Board and Salmon Recovery Council, both of which have County elected official representation. The Caucus works to ensure coastal county interests and priorities are brought forward to the Legislative Steering Committee, state and federal agencies, tribal nations, and other key stakeholders.

## 2023-24 Key Accomplishments

- Supported WSAC members serving on Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) Boards, Councils, & Committees.
- Represented and/or coordinated representation in PSP meetings and other state efforts that impact communities along the Puget Sound and Pacific coast.
- Monitored and reported on Puget Sound Partnership efforts that involved county policy interests to WSAC policy staff and the Counties Coastal Caucus including the 2022-2026 Action Agenda items such as the RFP opportunities provided through the Habitat, Shellfish, and Stormwater Initiative Leads.
- Planned and coordinated the annual meeting to include a briefing on legislative priorities related to salmon recovery and the Puget Sound and Coastal Waters. The agenda also includes state agency briefings on funding opportunities and grant application tools that advance salmon recovery in the state.
- Monitored and communicated to Coastal Counties about shared work plan priorities for the Salmon Recovery Council and Ecosystem Coordination Board.
- Acted as a point of contact for state agencies, tribes and NGOs to distribute pertinent information and participation opportunities to Coastal Counties.



# Columbia River Caucus

The Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development Program was initiated by the Legislature in 2006. The purpose of the program is to seek out and develop new water supply in eastern Washington. New water supplies are intended for both in-stream and out-of-stream use; water from projects funded by the program are allocated 1/3 for in-stream use and 2/3 for out-of-stream use.

WSAC receives funding from the Department of Ecology to provide staff support to eastern Washington county commissioners. This allows commissioners to participate as full partners in the program. The commissioners meet quarterly as the Columbia River Caucus.

## 2023-24 Key Accomplishments

- Caucus members continue to monitor Columbia River Treaty negotiations between the U.S. and Canada.
- Held quarterly meetings of the Columbia River Caucus to inform members of the issues affecting the Columbia River system and to engage directly with Ecology.
- Monitored and advocated for county interests on several legislative proposals on water policy during the legislative session.
- Represent counties on the Washington Water Policy Association.
- Represented counties, along with three WSAC members on the Riparian Roundtable discussing statewide policy proposals for riparian regulations including restoration requirements.
- Four Caucus members represent counties on the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (CRPAG). These members work with others on the CRPAG to advise the Office of Columbia River on administering the Columbia River Program.
- Engaged with tribal representatives on the Biden administration agreement between the US and Tribes for the Columbia River.
- Received a presentation from federal government representatives on the Agreement in Principle for the Columbia River Treaty between the US and Canada.
- Received a presentation from Klamath Water Users about the ongoing water management issues in the Klamath River Basin in Oregon.



# Timber and Public Lands Program

The timber counties program works diligently to support, advocate for, and represent our member counties with interests in timberland management issues. This includes counties that are beneficiaries of state forestlands and counties with other private, state, and federal forestlands utilized for commercial timber harvest, conservation, recreation, and other purposes.

## 2023-24 Key Accomplishments

- Held quarterly meetings with the Timber Counties Caucus members to receive reports from WSAC representatives on the Board of Natural Resources, TFW Policy Committee, CMER Committee, updates from DNR, and to provide information on developing topics in forest management.
- Implemented a “Timber 101” section for all quarterly caucus meetings to provide training on timber land management issues.
- Represented WSAC on each of the Adaptive Management Program functions, including the Forest Practices Board, Timber, Fish & Wildlife Policy, and CMER.
- Monitored and advocated for county interests on several legislative proposals during the legislative session.
- Supported the passage of a \$70 million budget proviso for forestland acquisition in the 2023 legislative session and \$15 million in 2024. Funding will preserve older forests in some counties and replace encumbered State Forestlands in five counties.
- Worked with the Encumbered Lands Proviso Working Group to develop a proposal for distributing benefits from a newly created encumbered lands replacement forestland trust that pools forestland to benefit multiple counties.
- Successfully implemented WSAC’s policy for concurrence on DNR purchases for replacing encumbered State Forestlands in 5 counties. The policy was developed in 2022 by the Encumbered Lands Proviso Working Group and adopted by the WSAC Board of Directors.
- Monitored the Northwest Forest Plan update process.
- Provided input to DNR on the development of their Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation strategic plan.
- Met with the new Region 6 Forester for the USFS.
- Monitored the work of the carbon forest management workgroup.

# 2023 Financial Health

## 2023-24 Key Accomplishments

**1**

**Earned nearly \$1.1 million dollars from contracts, \$777k from state contracts. Managed 12 different subcontracts.**

**2**

**Strategically invested in CD's to earn nearly \$70k in interest.**

**3**

**Made mid-year budget reductions to mitigate pending loss of revenue.**

**4**

**Procured a firm to manage the Executive Director transition and recruitment.**

**5**

**Developed plan to evaluate and change membership dues structure in 2024.**

# 2023 Financial Dashboard

**Total Assets:**  
**\$3,278,924**

Cash: \$1,378,891  
A/R & Prepaids: \$1,697,810  
Fixed & Long-Term Assets: \$202,222

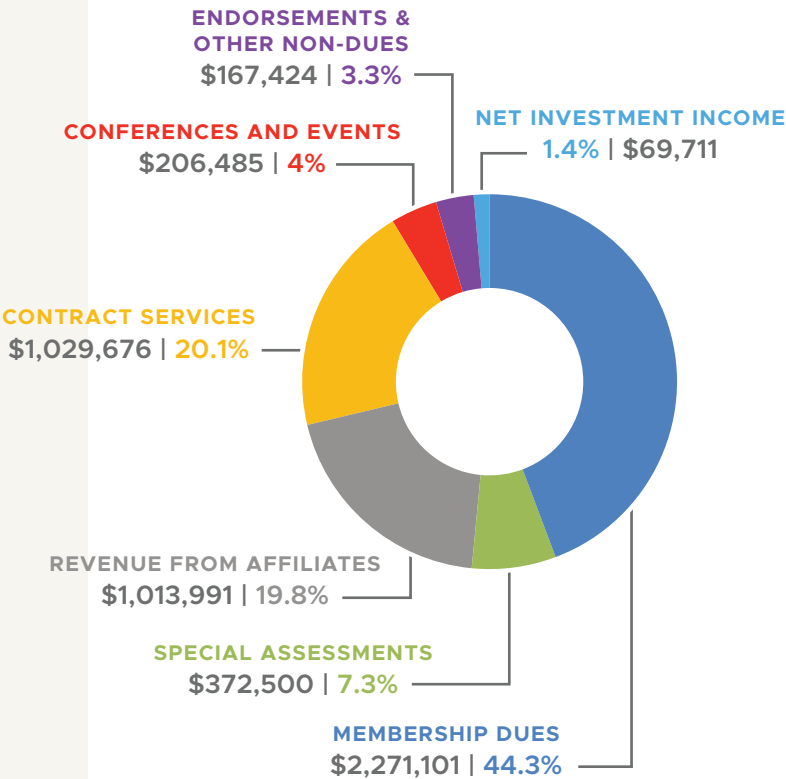
**Net Assets:**  
**\$1,897,826**

Change from 2022:  
\$257,901

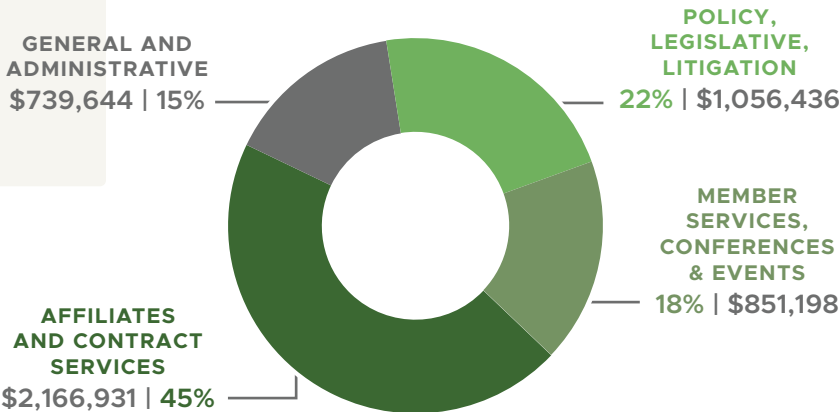
**Liabilities:**  
**\$1,381,282**

Payables: \$910,121  
Deferred Rev: \$471,161

## 2023 REVENUES Total: \$5,130,889



## 2023 EXPENSES Total: \$4,814,209



# Staff Directory

## Administration & Finance

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Director*  
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**Bridget Lockling**  
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## Communications & Member Services

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**Buqua Pitts**  
*Hospitality  
Assistant*

## Program Services



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## Policy & Legislative Relations

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## WSALPHO

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**Tracey Thomas**  
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# Executive Committee

## Executive Committee 2023-2024



**PRESIDENT**  
**Lisa Janicki**  
Skagit County



**FIRST VICE  
PRESIDENT**  
**Rob Coffman**  
Lincoln County



**SECOND VICE  
PRESIDENT**  
**Mark Ozias**  
Clallam County



**IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT**  
**Mary Kuney**  
Spokane County

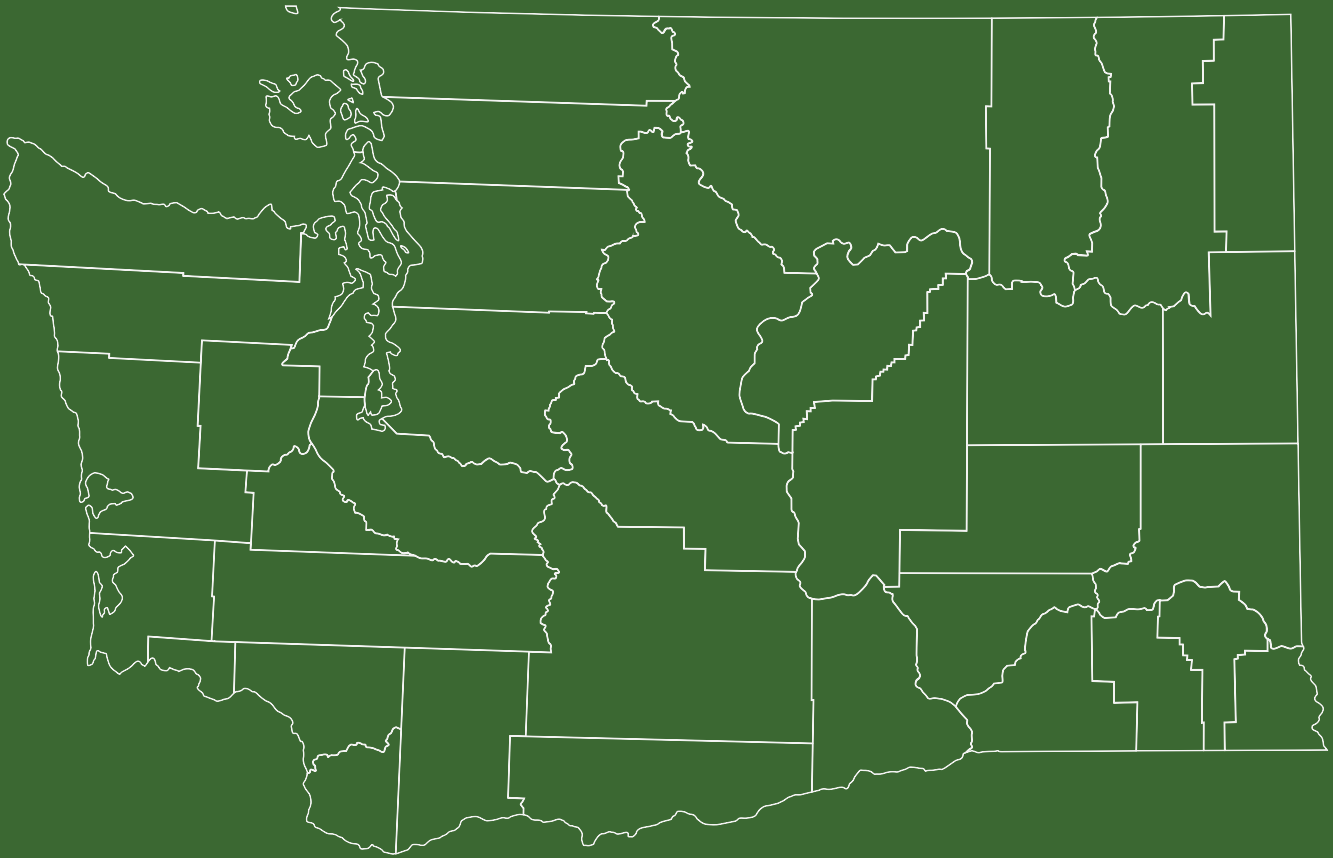
## Board Members

Michael Largent	Whitman County
Scott Hutsell	Lincoln County
Jani Hitchen	Pierce County
Megan Dunn	Snohomish County
Josh Kerns	Spokane County
Glen Yung	Clark County
Carolina Mejia	Thurston County
Katie Walters	Kitsap County
Amanda McKinney	Yakima County
Satpal Sidhu	Whatcom County
Will McKay	Benton County
Wes McCart	Stevens County
Dan Sutton	Douglas County
LaDon Linde	Yakima County
Art Swannack	Whitman County
Janet St. Clair	Island County
Nate Nehring	Snohomish County
Christine Minney	San Juan County
Sharon Trask	Mason County

## Alternates

Ryan Mello	Pierce County
Jared Mead	Snohomish County
Al French	Spokane County
Karen Bowerman	Clark County
Tye Menser	Thurston County
Kaylee Galloway	Whatcom County
Michael Alvarez	Benton County
Danny Stone	Grant County
Amber Waldref	Spokane County
Peter Browning	Skagit County
Dennis Weber	Cowlitz County





**WASHINGTON STATE  
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**

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