

February 4, 2026



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

**Washington Counties Building
Thurston County
Olympia, Washington**



WSAC Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Washington Counties Building
Olympia, WA – Thurston County
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 – 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Lunch will be available at 12:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

<https://wsac-org.zoom.us/j/88201596147?pwd=XDQMk1saPYPJPXtbw9JqYrr7SeAJ2H.1&from=addon>

Meeting ID: 882 0159 6147

Passcode: 124934

TIME*	Encl.	PRESENTER(s)	AGENDA	TYPE
1:00 pm		President Ozias	CALL TO ORDER and Introductions; Establish Quorum	
	✓	President Ozias	1. APPROVE Agenda	Action
	✓	President Ozias	2. APPROVE MINUTES: November 18, 2025	Action
		President Ozias	3. President's Report	Report
		President Ozias	4. Public Comment Limited to Items on Agenda	
LEGAL AFFAIRS				
1:30 pm	✓	Derek Young	5. Potential or Pending Litigation 6. Amicus Update	Report
WSAC BUSINESS				
1:45 pm	✓	Derek Young	7. WSAC Conflict of Interest Policy Review <i>Action: Certify WSAC Board of Directors were informed in writing & briefed on WSAC Conflict of Interest Policy</i> Resolution: #2026-01	Action
2:00 pm	✓	Jessica Strozewski	8. Boards and Commissions (Nominations and Appointments) <i>Action: Consider Adopting Nominations and Appointments</i> Resolutions: #2026-02	Action
2:15 pm			Break	
2:30 pm	✓	Derek Young Mitch Netzer Jessica Roth	9. Solutions Center: Business Development Program Update (Mitch & Jessica) WSAC Health Update (w/Tim Brown, Alliant) WSAC Finance Proposal <i>Action: Consider Approving Authorization for Exploration and Formation of a Washington Counties Finance Authority</i> Resolution: #2026-03	Action

STAFF REPORTS				
3:15 pm	✓	Derek Young	10. Executive Director	Discussion
	✓	Derek Young	11. Finance & Administration Report - WSAC dues letter	Discussion
	✓	Paul Jewell	12. Policy and Legislative Relations	Discussion
	✓	Mitch Netzer	13. Business Development & Communications Report	Discussion
	✓	Jessica Strozewski	14. Member Services Report	Discussion
WRITTEN PROGRAM REPORTS				
	✓	Paul Jewell Eric Johnson Mark Meleason	15. Timber & Public Lands Program	Report
	✓	Paul Jewell	16. Columbia River Program	Report
OTHER BUSINESS				
4:00 pm		President Ozias & WSAC Members	19. NACo Reports	Report
		President Ozias & WSAC Members	20. WSAC Board of Director Reports from activities on Statewide Boards and Commissions <i>Presentation by WSAC Board Members on current issues relating to Statewide Boards and Commissions they serve/represent WSAC on</i>	
		President Ozias	21. Other Business	
5:00 pm			MEETING ADJOURNED WSAC Legislative Reception follows from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Uptown Grill - 514 Capitol Way S.	

***ALL times are approximate only**

NEXT MEETING of the WSAC Board of Directors

(In-person with Zoom options for these meetings will be available)

May 13, 2026 – Wednesday

Marcus Whitman Hotel – Walla Walla, WA – *Walla Walla County*

September 17, 2026 – Thursday

Hotel Windrow – Ellensburg, WA – *Kittitas County*

November 17, 2026 – Tuesday

Greater Tacoma Convention Center – Tacoma, WA – *Pierce County*

Count	ByLaws Ref	Population	Executive Board Seat	Title	First Name	Last Name	County
12	< Quorum						
1	3.4a		President	Commissioner	Mark	Ozias	Clallam
2	3.4a		1st Vice-President	Commissioner	Gunner	Fulmer	Walla Walla
3	3.4a		2nd Vice-President	Commissioner	Katie	Walters	Kitsap
4	3.4b, 3.17.2		IP-President	Commissioner	Rob	Coffman	Lincoln
			Board Seat	Title	First Name	Last Name	County
3.4f	2,347,800	King County Executive	INACTIVE MEMBERS				
3.4e 1	2,347,800	King County Council	INACTIVE MEMBERS				
5		946,300	Pierce (<i>Jaime Smith</i>)	Executive	Ryan	Mello	Pierce
6	3.4e 2	946,300	Pierce	Councilmember	Jani	Hitchen	Pierce
7		859,800	Snohomish (<i>L.Harper / A.Vaughn</i>)	Executive	Dave	Somers	Snohomish
8	3.4e 3	859,800	Snohomish	Councilmember	Megan	Dunn	Snohomish
9	3.4e 4	554,600	Spokane	Commissioner	Mary	Kuney	Spokane
10	3.4e 5	527,400	Clark	Councilor			Clark
11	3.4e 6	303,400	Thurston	Commissioner	Tye	Menser	Thurston
12	3.4e 7	283,200	Kitsap	Commissioner			Kitsap
13	3.4e 8	261,200	Yakima	Commissioner	Amanda	McKinney	Yakima
14	3.4e 9	235,800	Whatcom	Executive	Satpal	Sidhu	Whatcom
15	3.4e 10	215,500	Benton	Commissioner	Will	McKay	Benton
16	3.4d 1		Eastern Region	Commissioner			
17	3.4d 2		Eastern Region	Commissioner	Dan	Sutton	Douglas
18	3.4d 3		Eastern Region	Commissioner	LaDon	Linde	Yakima
19	3.4d 4		Eastern Region	Commissioner	Art	Swannack	Whitman
20	3.4c 1		Western Region	Councilmember	Jane	Fuller	San Juan
21	3.4c 2		Western Region	Commissioner	Sean	Swope	Lewis
22	3.4c 3		Western Region	Commissioner	Carolina	Mejia	Thurston
23	3.4c 4		Western Region	Commissioner	Janet	St. Clair	Island
			Board Alternate Seat	Title	First Name	Last Name	County
3.4f	2,347,800	King County Executive	#N/A	INACTIVE MEMBERS			
3.4e 1	2,347,800	King County Council	#N/A	INACTIVE MEMBERS			
1	3.4e 2	946,300	Pierce	Councilmember	Robyn	Denson	Pierce
2	3.4e 3	859,800	Snohomish	Councilmember	Jared	Mead	Snohomish
3	3.4e 4	554,600	Spokane	Commissioner	Al	French	Spokane
4	3.4e 5	527,400	Clark	Councilor	Matt	Little	Clark
5	3.4e 6	303,400	Thurston	Commissioner	Vacant		Thurston
6	3.4e 7	283,200	Kitsap	Commissioner	Christine	Rolfes	Kitsap
7	3.4e 8	261,200	Yakima	Commissioner	Vacant		Yakima
8	3.4e 9	235,800	Whatcom (<i>Jessica Rienstra</i>)	Councilmember	Kaylee	Galloway	Whatcom
9	3.4e 10	215,500	Benton	Commissioner	Michael	Alvarez	Benton
10	3.4d 1		Eastern Region	Commissioner	Zack	Trudell	Ferry
11	3.4d 2		Eastern Region	Commissioner	Scott	Hutsell	Lincoln
12	3.4c 1		Western Region	Commissioner	Heather	Dudley-Nollette	Jefferson
13	3.4c 2		Western Region	Commissioner	Pat	Tarzwel	Mason
Affiliate Presidents			Board Affiliates (Non-voting Mbrs)		First Name	Last Name	County / City
			ACHS		Malissa	Adame	Pierce
			WACCC		Jennifer	Roll	Island
			WACSWM	Co-Chair	Becci	Piepel	Douglas
			WACSWM	Co-Chair	Margo	Gillaspy	Skagit
			WCAA		Matt	Rasmusson	Benton
			WSACE		Susan	Eugenis	Cowlitz
			WSACRPD		Michelle	Mercer	Benton
			WSALPHO		Carla	Prock	Benton-Franklin
			WSEMA		Kyle	Bustad	Thurston
			WSUEXT		Anthony	Gromko	Snohomish

Washington State Association of Counties
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

November 18, 2025

Opening

The Board of Directors of the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) met on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, starting at noon at The Davenport Grand Hotel, Spokane County, Spokane, Washington, and via Zoom. According to Association Bylaws, all directors and alternates were notified of the meeting appropriately.

Board members present: President Rob Coffman, 1st Vice President Mark Ozias, 2nd Vice President Gunner Fulmer, Immediate Past President Lisa Janicki, Immediate Past President Mary Kuney, Mark Burrows, Megan Dunn, Al French, Jane Fuller, Jani Hitchen, LaDon Linde, Matt Little, Joe McDermott, Will McKay, Amanda McKinney, Carolina Mejia, Tye Menser, Christine Minney, Vicki Raines, Oran Root, Janet St. Clair, Chris Seubert, Jaime Smith (Pierce County Executive), Dan Sutton, Art Swannack, Sean Swope, Sharon Trask, Annika Vaughn (Snohomish County Executive), and Katie Walters. A quorum was present.

Staff and others present: Derek Young, Bertha Clayton, Amy Cruver, Lynn Fiorillo-Lowe, Tom Handy, Paul Jewell, Tom McBride, Joe McDermott, Todd Mielke, Deb Munguia, Mitch Netzer, Jessica Roth, Ryan Rundell, Mike Shaw, Curtis Steinhauer, Axel Swanson, and Ron Wesen

Call to Order and Approval of Agenda: The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. President Coffman determined a quorum was present to conduct business. It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as proposed. The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting: A motion was made by Commissioner Dan Sutton and seconded by Commissioner Sharon Trask to approve the minutes of September 18, 2025, WSAC Board of Directors Regular Meeting as drafted. The motion passed.

President's Report: President Coffman welcomed those in attendance and encouraged the attendees their participation at the County Leaders Conference.

WSAC Business Actions

An opportunity for public comment was provided—no public comments.

2026 Proposed WSAC Board of Directors Meeting Schedule: Derek Young presented the 2025 meeting schedule for the Board of Directors.

Resolution #2025-21: A motion was made by Commissioner Dan Sutton and seconded by Commissioner Sharon Trask to approve **Resolution #2025-21**, which establishes the 2026 Regular Meeting Schedule and allows WSAC staff to publish and advise WSAC members and affiliates of the 2026 Regular Meeting schedule. The motion carried.

Statewide Boards and Commissions: Derek Young reported on the nominations received for open county or local government-represented statewide boards and commissions positions.

Resolution #2025-22: A vacancy on the Local Government Advisory Committee exists. Commissioner Sean Swope made a motion seconded by Commissioner Sharon Trask to approve **Resolution #2025-22** and transmit the name of Grace Jimenez, Chief Accountant, Lewis County. The motion passed, and the name will be submitted to the State Auditor's Office.

Resolution #2025-23: There is a vacancy on the Building Code Council for an Eastern Region representative. A motion was made by Commissioner Sharon Trask, seconded by Commissioner LaDon Linde, to approve **Resolution #2025-23** and nominate Tom Handy, Commissioner, Whitman County, and transmit his name to the Governor's Office. The motion unanimously passed.

Resolution #2025-24: The Bridge Advisory Committee, Eastern Region Representative. A motion was made by Commissioner Dan Sutton and seconded by Commissioner Sharon Trask to approve **Resolution #2025-24** and transmit the names of Michael Duke, Bridge Program Manager, Spokane County and James Wege, County Engineer, Lincoln County, and transmit the nominee's names to the Washington State Department of Transportation Local Programs. The motion carried.

Resolution #2025-25: The Bridge Advisory Committee, Western Region Representative. A motion was made by Commissioner LaDon Linde and seconded by Commissioner Sharon Trask to approve **Resolution #2025-25** and transmit the names of John Becker, County Engineer, Grays Harbor County and Doug Ranney, County Engineer, Whatcom County, and transmit the nominees' names to the Washington State Department of Transportation Local Programs. The motion unanimously carried.

Reports

Member Reports & Staff Reports: Member and staff reports are available in the board packet.

Closing

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be on Wednesday, February 4, 2026.

Adjourn: There being no further business, President Rob Coffman adjourned the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Mark Ozias, WSAC President

Katie Walters, 2nd Vice President

DRAFT

AUTHORIZED AND ACTIVE LITIGATION

DCYF Intake Suspension – Pierce County et al. v. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families – King Co. no. 24-2-17331-5

On July 5, 2024, without prior notice, DCYF stated its intention to stop complying with its statutory obligation to admit juvenile offenders into Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) facilities “effective [that day].” As a result, youth have been forced to remain indefinitely in county detention facilities that vary in their capacity levels and program capabilities from county to county and often lack the treatment and enrichment programs the Juvenile Justice Act requires. The result risks the safety of youth in the justice system and transfers the current overcrowding and safety issues experienced in JR facilities directly to the counties. While DCYF has admitted that it acted “too abruptly” and “did not adequately consider the entire juvenile justice system as a whole,” it has nonetheless continued to violate its clear statutory obligation. Because DCYF’s conduct will result in irremediable harm to the affected youth and the counties, WSAC and co-plaintiff counties filed a motion for preliminary injunction in King County Superior Court on July 31, 2024, asking the court to require DCYF to comply with its statutory obligations. While there are many reverberating costs and complications related to this act, the main legal arguments included are:

- DCYF has a duty to comply with its statutory and legal obligations.
- Courts do not have the discretion to directly commit juvenile offenders to county facilities.
- The Juvenile Justice Act specifically obligates only DCYF to provide required rehabilitative facilities to juvenile offenders, and DCYF is denying them necessary rehabilitation, and public safety is negatively impacted by this suspension.

The preliminary injunction hearing was scheduled for August 14, 2024, in front of King County Superior Court Judge Whedbee. Once the suit was filed, the State reached out and asked if WSAC and its co-plaintiff counties would be willing to strike the preliminary injunction and come to an agreement on juvenile admissions to JR. On August 8, 2024, an agreed order was filed in which DCYF agreed to initiate the admission of juvenile offenders to DCYF facilities on or by August 9, 2024, and to provide transportation for such offenders, to the extent possible, to these facilities within three business days. DCYF also agreed to provide advance notice of at least ten judicial days to WSAC and its co-plaintiff counties of any future restrictions on admissions.

Since then, WSAC staff have continued communicating with DCYF and the Governor’s Office to ensure continued compliance with the agreement.

WSAC is closely monitoring and opposing HB 2389/SB 6062, which we believe violates the terms of our agreement. We may need to consider reopening this case if the bill progresses.

Civil Conversion – Pierce County et al. v. DSHS et al., No 3:23-cv-5775

Following repeated violations of court orders by the State, a coalition of 28 counties (Coalition) and WSAC (represented by Pacifica Law Group) filed a lawsuit in Pierce County Superior Court against the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) on August 23, 2023, over DSHS's decision to stop providing initial evaluation and subsequent treatment for a rising number of patients in need of behavioral health support when exiting the criminal legal system.

The Coalition has also filed a motion for preliminary injunction to compel DSHS's immediate compliance with state law and court orders. The Coalition includes Asotin, Clallam, Cowlitz, Douglas, Grant, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Klickitat, Lewis, Lincoln, Pacific, Pierce, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima Counties. Six additional counties have now joined the Coalition, including Chelan, Clark, Columbia, Garfield, Stevens, and Okanogan Counties, representing over 7 million of the State's residents.

When a person with a severe mental health condition or cognitive disability has their charges dismissed because they cannot understand the charges, DSHS is ordered by the Court to evaluate that individual and, if necessary, provide effective behavioral health treatment. This system, called a civil conversion commitment, focuses on people with severe behavioral health conditions whom the crisis and outpatient behavioral health system have not adequately served.

Despite court orders and state laws requiring them, DSHS has asserted that it is no longer obligated to evaluate or treat patients whose criminal charges are dismissed, citing a federal judge's orders in a separate case. To date, the agency has repeatedly argued that it will not follow what appear to be precise statutory and court-ordered legal requirements, leaving hundreds of individuals across the State to lose their chance for mental health treatment that might break the cycle of re-offense.

Charges are dropped against individuals when they are determined incompetent to stand trial, and the State fails to provide restoration services or cannot restore their competency. The individuals are then released into the community without facing justice or receiving the treatment courts have ordered. When DSHS fails to provide restoration services, individuals are referred back to their home counties to designated crisis responders, placing the burden of care on counties despite a state law requiring the State to do so. These releases compound a harmful cycle where the State does not meet its responsibility of care and leaves individuals at risk of re-offending, repeating the legal process without any interruption for care and treatment.

In the *Trueblood* case, after failing to follow its legal obligations, DSHS was held in contempt, and the Federal Court imposed a \$100 million fine. DSHS now claims that its refusal to follow state law with conversion patients is the fault of the Federal Court. However, nothing in the Court's order interferes with DSHS's obligation or ability to provide evaluations and restorative services.

While the State invested heavily in behavioral health in the 2023 legislative session and purchased a former behavioral health hospital in Tukwila to address a capacity shortage, DSHS has refused to provide the care ordered by courts and required by state law.

The request for preliminary injunction filed on the 23rd asked the Court to immediately order DSHS to comply with its obligations under state law. It created a pathway for the Court to instantly determine the underlying legal issue and restore the civil conversion commitment process.

The Coalition's motion for preliminary injunction was scheduled to be heard in front of Judge Alicia Burton on September 8, 2023, in Pierce County Superior Court. However, the State filed a notice of removal that moved this case to the federal court, which, in turn, canceled the September 8th injunction hearing to sort out jurisdictional issues with the federal court. In response to the notice of removal, the Coalition and WSAC moved to remand the matter back to Pierce County Superior Court as we believed the State improperly removed the matter to federal court. Removal to Federal Court is only permitted when the complaint is founded on a claim or right that arises under federal law. However, our complaint was based solely on the State's causes of action for declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, and mandamus based on DSHS's violation of duties under a state statute and court orders. DSHS argued that the complaint was subject to removal because its defense rested on its interpretation of the recent *Trueblood* contempt order. However, we believed the case was not subject to removal from state court because DSHS planned to raise a federal claim in defense of state law action. Thus, the federal court was not the appropriate venue.

Because of the impacts of DSHS's improper delay tactics on patient well-being and public safety, WSAC filed an emergency motion for remand or, in the alternative, a temporary restraining order pending the determination of the motion for remand. This was filed on August 31, 2023. The case was assigned to Judge Pechman (the *Trueblood* judge), who declined to address the motion for remand on an emergency basis and noted the motion on her regular schedule, set for September 22, 2023. The Court refused to consider the interim request for a temporary restraining order.

On September 26, 2023, US District Court Judge Pechman granted Counties an Emergency Motion to remand the case:

"to Pierce County Superior Court for resolution of the underlying dispute between the Counties and DSHS. The issues presented in the Counties' lawsuit have only tangential relation to the rights at issue in Trueblood. Without a federal claim or substantial federal question, the Court lacks jurisdiction to preside over this lawsuit. The discrete and unique state law issues concerning civil commitment evaluation and notice must instead be decided by the Pierce County Superior Court, the forum in which the Counties initially filed this lawsuit. For these reasons, the Court GRANTS Plaintiffs' Motion to Remand and REMANDS this action to Pierce County Superior Court."

On October 6, 2023, Pierce County Superior Court Judge Michael Schwartz granted the Counties' Motion for a Preliminary Injunction. Under the terms of the order, DSHS was immediately required to perform its statutory obligation under RCW 10.77.086 to evaluate all new conversion patients. These are patients for whom criminal charges were dismissed after they were found incompetent and non-restorable. The Court further enjoined DSHS from releasing existing conversion patients without providing statutorily sufficient notification. The Court indicated that it would have issued a Writ of Mandamus if injunctive relief was unavailable. DSHS immediately asked the court to stay the injunction for 90 days. The Court denied this request because the harm to patients and the community caused by DSHS's "dilatatory" actions was ongoing.

The preliminary injunction will stay in place until after a trial on the matter. Because there are no disputed facts, subsequent proceedings are really a formality.

In January 2024, the Coalition and the State were working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to settle the case that includes the following elements:

1. The receipt of patients by the State referred there by court order under RCW 10.77.086(7);
2. Advance notice by the State of the release of committed persons under RCW 71.05.425;
3. Assistance to the State by the Counties to limit or avoid overcrowding of state hospitals, regional treatment facilities, and other facilities and to improve the State's ability to meet its obligations under state law, federal law, and federal court orders;
4. The Counties' providing information and documents under RCW 10.77.075 to the State to improve the State's ability to proceed under RCW 10.77.086(7); and
5. Assistance is given to DSHS evaluators who seek good cause extensions from the court for time, under RCW 10.77.068(5), to conduct competency evaluations.

All counties signed the MOU by the deadline.

WSAC staff opposed legislation that violated the terms of the agreement and successfully amended the bill to achieve an acceptable outcome. We will continue to monitor and enforce the agreement as necessary.

Indigent Defense - Washington State Association of Counties et. al. v. State of Washington, No. 23-202911-24

In 2018, WSAC began to study the feasibility of potential legal action regarding the State's constitutional duty to provide trial court indigent defense funding.

- Pacifica Law Group researched and analyzed potential and likely claims – statutory and constitutional.
- WSAC filed an Amicus Brief on a case that asks if the State of Washington or the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) has an actionable duty to cure claimed systemic and significant deficiencies in a county's indigent defense services to juveniles charged with criminal offenses. (Davison v. State of Washington and Washington State Office of Public Defense, Supreme Court, No. 96766-1)X
- In 2017, the plaintiff, supported by the ACLU, sued the State, alleging that Grays Harbor County systemically failed to provide a constitutionally adequate indigent juvenile defense. Grays Harbor County was not named as a party to the suit. Davison asked Thurston County Superior Court to declare that the State and OPD must act when they become aware of a systemic failure by a county to provide a constitutionally adequate indigent juvenile defense.
 - The trial court ruled that the State must act if it knows of a county's systemic failure to provide constitutionally adequate indigent juvenile defense without regard to whether the County could remedy the problem more appropriately.
 - The State filed a motion for direct review to the Supreme Court on January 28, 2019, and the Court accepted the review.
 - The Grays Harbor Board of County Commissioners formally requested WSAC to submit an Amicus Curiae Brief.
 - The WSAC Executive Committee approved amicus involvement on April 7, 2019.
 - The Pacifica Law Group, on behalf of WSAC, submitted an Amicus Curiae Brief on September 27, 2019, that made the following points:

- The State of Washington has an *affirmative constitutional duty* to ensure the adequacy of indigent defense; and
 - The Court should not rule on who (State or county) is responsible for funding indigent defense because it was improperly before the Court.
- On November 12, 2019, oral arguments were made before the Washington State Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court filed its ruling on 6/25/20 - <https://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/pdf/967661.pdf>.
- The Washington State Supreme Court confirmed that the State must ultimately provide indigent defense services as required under the U.S. and Washington Constitutions. While the State has the discretion to delegate to local governments responsible for providing these services, *in so doing, the State must provide local governments with the authority and means necessary to furnish constitutionally adequate indigent defense*. The Court remanded the case to consider whether the systemic and structural deficiencies in the current state system, as alleged by the plaintiffs and described in WSAC's amicus brief, violate the State's constitutional duties.
- The plaintiff sought Supreme Court reconsideration.
 - WSAC prepared an amicus brief to support reconsideration.
- The Supreme Court asked the State to respond to the request for reconsideration (9/1/2020)
 - The Supreme Court denied reconsideration on 10/20/2020.
- WSAC reviewed potential concurrent or subsequent legal actions.
- WSAC initiated work on data gathering associated with indigent defense and county expenditures, systems of delivery, county revenues and expenses, etc.
- WSAC staff reached out to secure contact points for each county regarding this potential litigation as necessary.
- WSAC staff established a data/information steering committee with county budget and policy staff.
- WSAC contractor established an indigent defense data set and dashboard for counsel to refer to.
- WSAC explored/identified potential co-plaintiffs as part of potential litigation, including individual counties.
- WSAC counsel worked on an indigent defense complaint.
- WSAC completed a political and environmental scan on filing complaints and timing.
- WSAC considered intervening in Davison v. State of Washington and Washington State Office of Public Defense Supreme Court, No. 96766-1, on remand in Thurston County Superior Court should it proceed.
- WSAC Legal Committee and Legislative Steering Committee both recommended the following to the WSAC Board of Directors:
 - There are merits and reasonable grounds to support a legal challenge to require the State to fully fund trial court indigent defense services; and
 - The WSAC Legislative Steering Committee and the Board of Directors should consider recommending and authorizing a legal challenge requiring the State to fully fund trial court indigent defense services.
- On May 5, 2021, the WSAC Board of Directors authorized a legal challenge requiring the State to fully fund trial court indigent defense services.
- WSAC and Pacifica Law Group identified and met with potential co-plaintiffs (individual counties, groups, organizations, associations, and individuals).
- WSAC updated data and information.

- WSAC worked with a public defense expert to provide context for the lawsuit from a state and national perspective.
- WSAC identified potential "budget" coordinators to aid in the litigation. WSAC was in discussions with the potential contractor and in contact with Stellar Associates to provide support on budget analysis.
- In 2022, Kitsap County, Lincoln County, and Yakima County joined as co-plaintiffs.
- Pacifica Law Group worked with co-plaintiff counties on the final preparation for filing the complaint.
- WSAC prepared communication materials for the case to provide to both members and the media.
- A decision was made to file the complaint in Thurston County Superior Court.
- In late November 2022, Kitsap County informed WSAC it would no longer be a co-plaintiff in the case. WSAC staff discussed with the WSAC Executive Committee and counsel the need to postpone filing the complaint and take time to discuss and potentially locate another co-plaintiff county.
- WSAC staff discussed with several western Washington counties about joining as a potential co-plaintiff.
- In June 2023, Pacific County joined as a co-plaintiff in the case.
- On October 31, 2023, the State of Washington filed its response seeking to dismiss the Counties' lawsuit based on the argument that counties lack standing and cannot assert claims on behalf of indigent criminal defendants.

The Court set a schedule to hear the State's request to dismiss the case:

- 8/6/24 – Disclosure of Fact Witnesses
- 9/5/24 – Disclosure of Plaintiff's Expert Witnesses
- 10/5/24 – Disclosure of Defendant's Expert Witnesses
- 11/4/24 – Disclosure of Rebuttal Witnesses
- 1/3/25 – Discovery Cutoff
- 3/7/25 – Dispositive Motions Heard (on or before this date)
- 3/7/25 – Mediation/ADR Settlement Conference (on or before this date)
- 5/2/25 – Pre-Trial Conference
- 6/2/25 – Non-Jury Trial

Informal Settlement Discussions began in January 2024.

At the Motion to Dismiss hearing held on March 22, 2024, Thurston County Superior Court Judge Allyson Zipp dismissed WSAC's lawsuit. WSAC and its co-plaintiff counties had 30 days from the date the decision was finalized to appeal Judge Zipp's ruling.

- On April 18, 2024, WSAC appealed the ruling directly to the Supreme Court.
- WSAC's Statement of Grounds for direct review was submitted May 3, 2024.
- WSAC Board of Directors authorized continuing the appeal on May 15, 2024.
- WSAC won the appeal, and the State petitioned the Supreme Court for review.
- 1/9/26 Washington State Supreme Court denied the State's petition for review, clearing the case for trial, probably sometime later this year. Staff will notify members when we have dates.

AUTHORIZED AND ACTIVE AMICUS CURIAE

State of Washington, et. al., Respondents, vs. DSHS, COA No. 57573-6-II.

The WSAC Board of Directors authorized an amicus curie brief in State of Washington, et. al., Respondents, vs. DSHS, COA No. 57573-6-II. The issue is whether counties can seek compensatory contempt sanctions against the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) when DSHS fails to timely transport Trueblood class members from jail, for admission at a state hospital for competency restoration, leaving counties to cover the costs of incarceration until the class members are transported. There is also a question as to whether a county may intervene in an underlying matter in order to pursue contempt sanctions against DSHS. The new schedule for this case is as follows:

- 12/4/23 – Opening Brief of Appellant
- 1/3/24 – Opening Brief of Respondent
- 2/17/24 – Brief of Amicus Curiae – After a motion under RAP 10.6 granting permission to file the brief, the brief must be filed no later than 45 days after the filing of the last brief of Respondent.

On February 28, 2024, Appellant (DSHS) and the Respondent-Cross-Appellants (45 individual defendants) filed their opening briefs. Pierce County will likely file its brief on June 28, 2024.

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL v. OKANOGAN COUNTY, COA No. 407471

The WSAC Board of Directors authorized an amicus curie brief in METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL v. OKANOGAN COUNTY, COA No. 407471, and joined the Washington State Association of Municipal Attorneys (WSAMA) to file.

The Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW (the“PRA”), serves an important public interest: providing the public with access to public records in furtherance of government transparency and accountability. But that transparency is not absolute, and in adopting the PRA, the legislature struck a balance between transparency and the needs of Washington’s public agencies to engage with and rely on confidential legal advice.

As a result, the PRA does not permit the public to access records protected by the attorney-client privilege. Washington’s public entities are permitted to consult with attorneys and obtain legal advice to best serve the public by understanding and evaluating the legal risks associated with their policies and decisions and to preserve that advice from disclosure under the PRA.

Based on the plain language of the PRA as interpreted and applied by the courts, legal advice given to public entities is not subject to the watered-down protections urged by MVCC. Instead, the PRA confirms that a confidential attorney-client relationship is fundamental to the efficient and effective function of government and the same protections afforded to advice given an individual or business.

The County’s redactions to the Memorandum for attorney-client privilege are fully consistent with the PRA’s directives and policies. By contrast, MVCC’s arguments ignore the PRA and the law governing attorney-client privilege. Accepting MVCC’s theories would erode public agencies’ ability to obtain protected legal advice to the public’s detriment.

Motion and brief filed November 7, 2024.

- 9/29/2025 Appeals Court Division III agreed with our argument and affirmed the trial court's decision, preserving privileged communication between attorneys and their elected client from disclosure under the Public Records Act.

Jamie Beenen, Appellant v. Lewis County, et al. No. 59591-5 (Wash. Ct. App. Jan. 17, 2025)

WSAC Executive Committee authorized the filing of an amicus brief due to the possibility of a negative outcome, which would dramatically increase liability for counties as property owners and lessors. Jamie Beenen was in a skydiving accident with a company operating out of an airport owned by Lewis County. Beenen asserts that Lewis County, as a government agency, has a special premises liability duty that would turn existing law and precedent on its head.

The trial court correctly dismissed on summary judgment, and we are asking the Appeals Court for the same.

- Motion and brief filed January 17, 2025.
- On 11/14/2025, the Court issued an order indicating that it will decide this case without oral argument. Ordinarily, although not universally, the decision of the Court to decide the case without argument means that the Court intends to affirm the trial court's decision.

February 4, 2026



BUSINESS ACTION AND REPORTS

February 5, 2025

TO: WSAC Board of Directors

FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Conflict of Interest Policy

WSAC's Comprehensive Policy Manual includes a Conflict of Interest policy specifically for the Board of Directors. WSAC has a duty (per federal 990 reporting requirements) to inform the board that this policy exists.

Highlights of the policy to note:

This policy applies to all Directors entitled to vote in accordance with the Association Bylaws, and to Alternate Directors acting on behalf of a Director.

The Directors and Officers of the Washington State Association of Counties ("WSAC") owe a duty of loyalty to the Association, which requires that in serving WSAC they act, not in their personal interests or in the interests of others, but rather solely in the interests of WSAC...

A conflict of interest may arise when a person has an existing or potential financial interest or other material interest that impairs, or might appear to impair, his/her independence or objectivity in the discharge of responsibilities and duties to WSAC...

Every Director and Officer must discharge his/her duties in good faith, with the degree of care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances...

Each Director and Officer must protect the confidential information of WSAC and must not use confidential information of WSAC for his/her personal benefit, or use such confidential information or his/her position as a Director or Officer to the detriment of WSAC...

Each Director and each Officer of WSAC shall promptly disclose any direct or indirect financial or other material interest that he or she has or reasonably expects to have in any proposed or existing Arrangement with WSAC prior to the start of any negotiations with respect to such matter...

A full copy of the policy follows this memo. The attached **Resolution #2026-01** is included as certification that the policy has been provided to and reviewed by the WSAC Board of Directors.



Contracts, transactions or arrangements of WSAC in which a Director or Officer has a direct or indirect financial or other material interest are not prohibited, but are subject to scrutiny. Any such proposed contract, transaction, or arrangement (collectively, "Arrangement") is to be reviewed to determine that it is in the best interests of WSAC.

For purposes of this Policy, a Director or Officer has a direct or indirect financial or other material interest in a proposed or existing Arrangement if he or she, or one of his/her relatives (a) has a substantial financial interest directly in the proposed or existing Arrangement; or (b) has a substantial financial interest in any other organization that (i) is a party to the proposed or existing Arrangement; or (ii) is in any way involved in the proposed or existing Arrangement, including through the provision of services in connection therewith (an "involved organization"); or (c) holds a position as trustee, director, officer, member partner, or employee in any such party or involved organization.

Substantial Financial Interest

A Director's or Officer's financial interest will be considered substantial if it involves (a) an ownership or investment interest representing more than 1% of the outstanding shares of a publicly traded company or 5% of the outstanding shares or comparable interest of a privately owned company with which WSAC has or is negotiating an Arrangement or which is an involved organization with respect to the Arrangement; or (b) an ownership or investment interest, which produces a significant amount of income for or constitutes a significant part of the net worth of the Director or Officer, or a relative of the Director or Officer, in any entity with which WSAC has or is negotiating an Arrangement or which is an involved organization with respect to the Arrangement; or (c) a compensation arrangement of any kind with any entity or individual with which WSAC has or is negotiating an Arrangement or with any involved organization with respect to the Arrangement.

Disclosure of Interest and Participation in Meeting

Each Director and each Officer of WSAC shall promptly disclose any direct or indirect financial or other material interest that he or she has or reasonably expects to have in any proposed or existing Arrangement with WSAC prior to the start of any negotiations with respect to such matter. A direct or indirect financial interest required to be disclosed under this Policy shall be disclosed in writing to the WSAC President (the "President"). Such disclosure shall include all material facts and supply any reasons why the Arrangement might be or not be in the best interest of WSAC. The President shall refer the issue to the Audit Finance & Investment Committee (the "Committee").

The Director or Officer who discloses a direct or indirect financial or other material interest in a proposed or existing Arrangement may make a presentation and respond to questions by the Committee, but after such presentation, he or she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and vote on, the Arrangement that results in the conflict of interest. As part of any such presentation, the Director or Officer shall provide to the Committee any reasons why the Arrangement might be or not be in the best interests of WSAC. The Committee shall determine whether WSAC can obtain a more advantageous Arrangement with reasonable efforts from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest. The Committee may, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed Arrangement. If a more advantageous contract, transaction, or arrangement is not reasonably attainable under circumstances that would not give rise



WSAC will pay or reimburse other members travel expenses when approved by the Executive Director when the meeting/activity is directly related to Association business and activities.

Part 2 – Conflict of Interest

This policy applies to all Directors entitled to vote in accordance with the Association Bylaws, and to Alternate Directors acting on behalf of a Director.

The Directors and Officers of the Washington State Association of Counties (“WSAC”) owe a duty of loyalty to the Association, which requires that in serving WSAC they act, not in their personal interests or in the interests of others, but rather solely in the interests of WSAC. Directors and Officers must have an undivided allegiance to WSAC’s mission and may not use their position as Directors or Officers, information they have about the WSAC, or WSAC’s property, in a manner that allows them to secure a pecuniary or other material benefit for themselves or their relatives [for purposes of this Policy, “relative” means spouse or significant other living in the same household (“life partner”), brothers or sisters (by whole or half-blood), life partners of brothers or sisters (by whole or half-blood), ancestors, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and life partners of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren]. Accordingly, a Director or Officer may not use his/her position at WSAC for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of WSAC, its mission, or its reputation.

A conflict of interest may arise when a person has an existing or potential financial interest or other material interest that impairs, or might appear to impair, his/her independence or objectivity in the discharge of responsibilities and duties to WSAC. This policy is intended to protect WSAC’s interests when it is contemplating entering into a contract, transaction, or arrangement that might benefit the private interests of a member of WSAC’s Board of Directors or an Officer of WSAC. This policy is also meant to aid Directors and Officers of WSAC in performing the duties imposed upon them by the laws of the State Washington and the United States of America with respect to their management responsibilities and fiduciary obligations to WSAC. WSAC is committed to transparency and openness in its operations.

Every Director and Officer must discharge his/her duties in good faith, with the degree of care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances. This requires using common sense, being diligent and attentive to WSAC’s needs, and making thoughtful decisions in the best interest of WSAC. A Director or Officer may not take personal advantage of a business opportunity that is offered to WSAC unless the Board of Directors of WSAC first determines not to pursue the opportunity.

Each Director and Officer must protect the confidential information of WSAC and must not use confidential information of WSAC for his/her personal benefit, or use such confidential information or his/her position as a Director or Officer to the detriment of WSAC. Confidential information is information obtained through the Director’s or Officer’s position that has not become public information.

Direct or Indirect Financial or Other Material Interest



to a conflict of interest, the Committee shall determine by majority vote of the disinterested members of the Committee whether the Arrangement is in WSAC's best interests and whether it is fair and reasonable to WSAC and shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the Arrangement in conformity with such determination.

Minutes of Meeting

The names of the Directors and Officers who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a direct or indirect financial or other material interest in a proposed or existing Arrangement with WSAC, the nature of the interest, and the extent of the Director's or Officer's participation in the relevant Committee meeting on matters related to the financial or other material interest shall be recorded in the minutes for that meeting. The minutes also shall include a record of any determination as to whether the Arrangement was in the best interest of and fair and reasonable to WSAC, notwithstanding the interest, and the specific reasons supporting the determination, including any alternatives to the proposed or existing Arrangement, the names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the proposed or existing Arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection therewith.

Co-Investment Interest

Each Director and each Officer of WSAC also shall disclose whether he or she, or one of his/her relatives, has personal funds invested with an investment manager providing, or expected to provide, investment management services to WSAC or in a professionally managed investment fund in which WSAC is invested or is considering investing (a "co-investment interest"). For the purposes of this Conflicts of Interest Policy, a "professionally managed investment fund" shall not include mutual funds or other similar investment vehicles generally available to the investing public on essentially the same terms. Such co-investment interest shall be disclosed in writing to President. Such disclosure shall include all material facts, including, but not limited to, fee arrangements and any preferential treatment received by the Director or Officer, or one of his/her relatives, and not available to other investors necessary to determine whether such co-investment interest may provide a benefit to the Director or Officer, or one of his/her relatives. If the President determines that the co-investment interest may provide some advantage to the Director or Officer, or one of his/her relatives, the President shall refer the issue to the Committee. The Director or Officer who discloses a co-investment interest may make a presentation and respond to questions from the Committee but shall not be present during the discussion of, and vote on, how to address the co-investment interest. The Committee shall determine what, if any, corrective action is required with respect to the co-investment interest, including, but not limited to, terminating the investment relationship or seeking an adjustment in fee structure.

Failure to Disclose

If the Committee has reasonable cause to believe that a Director or Officer has failed to disclose a direct or indirect financial or other material interest or co-investment interest subject to this Policy, it shall inform the Director or Officer of the basis for such belief and afford the Director or Officer an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose. If, after hearing the response of such individual and making such further investigation as may be warranted in the circumstances, the Committee

determines that the Director or Officer has in fact failed to disclose a direct or indirect financial or other material interest or co-investment interest subject to this Policy, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Employees Covered by Policy

This Policy shall apply to the Executive Director.

Policy Supplements Applicable Laws

This Policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state or federal laws or regulations governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit corporations.

Part 3 – Voting

Authorization

WSAC Bylaws:

- 2.7 Voting Rights
- 4.1 National Association of Counties – Board of Directors
- 4.2 National Association of Counties – Board of Directors Western Interstate Region
- 5.2 Election and Term of Office
- 5.5 Vacancies
- 5.6 Candidates for Office

Purpose

The following procedures are established to conduct the annual, regular, and special election procedures for the following positions:

- WSAC President
- WSAC 1st Vice President
- WSAC 2nd Vice President
- Regional Representatives
- National Association of Counties Board of Directors
- National Association of Counties Western Interstate Region Board of Directors

To support the elections and balloting procedures, WSAC shall acquire, maintain, and assure access to an online electronic election and balloting system.



Resolution #2026-01

WHEREAS, the Washington State Association of Counties' Board of Directors is charged under its Bylaws and Policies with governance for WSAC's operations and financial interests; and

WHEREAS, WSAC operations follow the WSAC Conflict of Interest Policy adopted by the WSAC Board of Directors in June 2008 and updated in September 2011; and

WHEREAS, All WSAC Directors are entitled to vote in accordance with the Association Bylaws, and Alternate Directors acting on behalf of a Director, have a duty to promptly disclose any direct or indirect financial or other material interest that he or she has or reasonably expects to have in any proposed or existing Arrangement with WSAC; and

WHEREAS, WSAC has a duty to inform Directors and Alternates that the Conflict of Interest Policy exists.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Washington State Association of Counties' Board of Directors and Alternates acknowledge that the WSAC Conflict of Interest Policy was transmitted to the WSAC Board of Directors on February 4, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Washington State Association of Counties' Board of Directors and Alternates received explanation and briefing on the WSAC Conflict of Interest Policy.

Approved by the Board of Directors of the Washington State Association of Counties on February 4, 2026.

Mark Ozias, WSAC President

Katie Walters, WSAC Second Vice President

February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors
FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director
PREPARED BY: Jessica Strozewski, Senior Manager, Member Experience
SUBJECT: Appointments and Nominations to Statewide Boards & Commissions

The following nominations were received for open county, or local government represented positions on statewide boards and commissions. Attached are applications from each candidate.

WSAC Policy on Board Appointment/Nomination Process

For Boards or Commissions where the WSAC Board of Directors is responsible for nominating individuals, the following process will be used:

The Board of Directors may approve that all nominees be forwarded to the appointing authority for further review via voice vote.

For Boards or Commissions where the WSAC Board of Directors has appointing authority, the the following process will be used:

For positions receiving two statements of interest, the Board of Directors shall conduct a hand vote to determine which candidate is the nominee/appointee. For positions receiving more than two statements of interest and where it is necessary to reduce the number of nominees, the board shall conduct an exhaustive ballot voting system until it is determined which candidate(s) are the nominee/appointee.

The exhaustive ballot voting system provides that each board member casts a single vote for their selected nominee. If no candidate is supported by a majority of votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and a further round of voting occurs. This process is repeated for as many rounds as necessary until one nominee has a majority of the Board of Directors present to vote. If more than one nominee needs to be selected, the Board shall continue to vote until a second nominee has a majority, and so on.

Nominations to the Governor

Public Records Exemptions Accountability Committee (Sunshine Committee)

Eligibility: Anyone in local government within our state

Number of Positions: One | Applications Received: One

WSAC does not have official authority. Governor requested nominee from WSAC.

Ryan Rundell, Commissioner, Columbia County

Boards with no Applicants

Public Works Board (West - Elected)

Appointing Authority: Governor

Eligibility: Elected county official from western region county

Number of Positions: One | Applications Received: None - ***Must have 4 names to move forward.***



Resolution #2026-02

WHEREAS, the Washington State Association of Counties' Board of Directors is charged with making recommendations and/or appointments to numerous Washington State boards, commissions, and committees, and

WHEREAS, it is vital that county governments' interests are fully represented on statewide boards, commissions and committees; and

WHEREAS, there is a vacancy on the Public Records Exemptions Accountability Committee; and

WHEREAS, the following county representative has sought nomination to fill this vacancy:

Ryan Rundell, Commissioner, Columbia County

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Washington State Association of Counties' Board of Directors nominates the following county representative to the Public Records Exemptions Accountability Committee:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that WSAC staff be directed to immediately transmit the nominee's name(s) to the Governor's Office; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that WSAC staff are directed to contact the nominees of their selection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that applicants not selected be notified and thanked for their commitment and interest in representing county government.

Approved by the Board of Directors of the Washington State Association of Counties on February 4, 2026.

Mark Ozias, WSAC President

Katie Walters, WSAC 2nd Vice President

Member Nomination Form

Position of Interest:

Public Records Exemptions Accountability (Sunshine Committee)

Name

Ryan Rundell

Title

County Commissioner

County:

Columbia County

If elected official, your current term ends?

Sunday, December 31, 2028

Have you contacted the Board or Commission of interest or visited their website to review the meeting schedule and to determine if you are able to meet their requirements?

Yes

As an appointee or nominee of WSAC, you will represent the interests and positions of the Association and act in the best interests of all counties. You may be required to report back to the WSAC Board verbally or in writing, upon request, about activities and decisions of the Board or Commission on which you serve. Do you agree to these responsibilities?

Yes

Statement of Interest:

Greetings,

After considering WSAC's email detailing this position, reading the RCW governing it, and visiting the website of the group, I would like to be considered for this board position. As a county commissioner, I am familiar with the demands of the Public Records Act. I believe this position would be interesting, a good opportunity to serve in a greater capacity, while not overloading my duties locally. I know I would only be one of several board members, but I would like to see the legislature reform the PRA so that the legislature is also subject to the same requirements as the counties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ryan Rundell



February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors & Alternates
FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Finance Corporation Feasibility

1. Executive Summary & Recommendation

To reduce our reliance on member dues and increase our capacity to serve our members, WSAC must transition from a resource-dependent organization to a resource-generative one.

An internal audit of 2025 market activity reveals that projects in our member counties generated over \$750,000 in financial transaction fees collected by state agencies or third parties. Furthermore, our members' reserve funds are often underperforming in state pools due to a lack of medium-term investment options.

This memo outlines a portfolio of four "High Reward" financial service authorities designed to capture this value. These programs utilize existing legal authority (RCW 39.34), pose zero liability to the WSAC's budget, and follow successful models established by our peers in California (CSAC) and Virginia (VACo).

Action Requested: Staff request authorization to circulate **Requests for Information (RFIs)** to potential banking, investment, and legal partners to formalize these programs for a 2026 launch.

2. The Opportunity: The "Leakage" Audit

Our member counties currently utilize state-run programs for financing and investment. While these programs are functional, they leave significant gaps in service—specifically in **speed** (financing), **yield** (investment), and **eligibility** (facilities).

2025 Market Snapshot (Non-Dues Revenue Lost):

- **Housing Bonds:** ~\$305M in Private Activity Bonds issued in WSAC counties (excl. King).
 - *Missed Revenue: \$764,000* (Issuance Fees).
- **Equipment Finance:** Est. \$25M in "gap" purchasing (vehicles/IT) missed by state cycles.
 - *Missed Revenue: \$25,000 - \$50,000* (Origination Fees).
- **Investment Yield:** Billions in county "Core Cash" earning short-term rates in the State LGIP.
 - *Missed Revenue: \$250,000+* (Asset Management Fees).

3. The Product Portfolio: Detailed Breakdown

We propose developing four distinct business lines under a single "Washington Counties Finance Authority" (WCFA) umbrella.

A. The Housing Authority (Conduit Issuance)

- **The Concept:** A "Conduit Issuer" Joint Powers Authority modeled after the CSAC Finance Corp. We issue tax-exempt private activity bonds for affordable housing developers and non-profits (YMCA, Hospitals).
- **The Gap:** The Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC) is centralized and bureaucratic. We will offer a "Concierge" alternative with 45-day approvals and local political alignment.
- **Real-World Scenario:** A developer wants to build a 100-unit workforce housing. They need tax-exempt financing to make the numbers work. Currently, they must wait for the State Commission's quarterly cycle. With WCFA, they apply to us, we vet the financials with our Bond Counsel, and our members sign off on the public benefit. The deal closes in 6 weeks, the housing gets built faster, and WSAC earns an issuance fee for less than what WSHFC would charge.
- **Member Benefit:** Local control over housing development and a new revenue stream for the WSAC without raising dues.
- **Revenue Potential: \$100k - \$500k annually** (Issuance fees plus ongoing administration paid by private developers).

B. The "Core Cash" Investment Pool

- **The Concept:** A medium-term bond fund (1-3 year duration) designed for county reserve funds, managed by a private partner.
- **The Gap:** The State Treasurer's Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) manages liquidity (overnight cash). It is not optimized for "Core Cash" (funds not needed for 12+ months). Our pool will compete on yield, targeting returns 50-100 basis points higher than the state pool.
- **Real-World Scenario:** A county has \$10 million in a capital reserve fund for a jail expansion that won't break ground for two years. Leaving that money in the State LGIP (which acts like a checking account) means significant interest is left on the table. By moving that \$10M to the WCFA "Core" pool, the county earns an extra 0.75% yield. That is **\$75,000 in new revenue** for the county.
- **Member Benefit:** Higher returns on idle tax dollars with professional, diversified management.

- **Revenue Potential: \$100k - \$250k annually** (WSAC retains ~5 basis points of the management fee).

C. The Master Lease Program (Equipment)

- **The Concept:** An "On-Demand" revolving credit facility for purchasing vehicles, IT, and yellow iron equipment.
- **The Gap:** The State Treasurer's "LOCAL" program only funds twice a year. Our program will fund **365 days a year** with a 5-day credit review, capturing the "reactive" purchases (e.g., crashed patrol cars, server failures) that cannot wait for a state cycle.
- **Real-World Scenario:** In November, a county sheriff needs to replace five patrol vehicles immediately due to high mileage and maintenance costs. The State Treasurer's next funding cycle isn't until June. The Sheriff can't wait 7 months. Using the WCFA Master Lease, the county completes a simple 3-page application and receives funding in 5 business days, securing the vehicles before model-year pricing increases.
- **Member Benefit:** Speed and flexibility. It functions like a commercial line of credit but with tax-exempt interest rates.
- **Revenue Potential: \$25k - \$50k annually** (Origination/Marketing fees).

D. The Bond Pool (Essential Infrastructure)

- **The Concept:** A pooled financing authority for "Essential Public Facilities" (Jails, Courthouses, Administration Buildings).
 - **The Gap:** The Public Works Trust Fund prioritizes "health and safety" infrastructure (water/sewer). They rarely fund administrative or justice facilities. This pool aggregates 3-4 counties needing facility upgrades into a single bond issuance, lowering the cost of borrowing for "unsexy" but critical infrastructure.
 - **Real-World Scenario: Three rural counties** each need to perform \$2-\$4 million in HVAC and roof upgrades to their courthouses. Issuing a standalone \$2 million bond is cost-prohibitive due to high legal and rating agency fees. WCFA bundles these into a single \$10 million issuance. The counties split the issuance costs, saving each \$30,000- \$50,000 in overhead.
 - **Member Benefit:** Access to capital markets for projects that State grants typically ignore.
 - **Revenue Potential: \$50k - \$100k annually** (Issuance fees).
-

4. Implementation Plan: The "Soft Launch"

We are utilizing a "Gate Stage" approach to minimize upfront costs. We will not spend significant legal dollars until we have validated partners.

Step 1: Partner Selection (February - March)

- **Action:** Circulate RFIs to potential partners.
 - **Legal:** Foster Garvey, Pacifica Law Group (for Authority formation).
 - **Banking:** Bank of America, PNC, KeyBank (for Master Lease capital).
 - **Investment:** PFM, Chandler Asset Management (for Investment Pool management).

Step 2: Formation (April - June)

- **Action:** Draft Interlocal Agreements (ILA) and recruit at least two "Sponsoring Counties" to sign the formation documents.
- **Action:** Board vote to formally incorporate the **Washington Counties Finance Authority**.

Step 3: Go-to-Market (July - November)

- **Action:** Secure pilot projects to prove the concept.
- **Launch:** Official unveiling at the **WSAC Annual County Leaders Conference (November 2026)**.



ATTACHMENT A: 2025 White Space Market Analysis

Subject: Audit of Financing Fees Generated in WSAC Member Counties

Date: February 4, 2026

Overview:

The following table represents a sample of "Private Activity Bond" transactions that occurred within WSAC member counties (excluding King County) during the 2025 calendar year. In every instance, the borrower paid an issuance fee (typically 25-100 basis points) to a state-level conduit issuer because a county-level alternative did not exist.

The "Leakage" Snapshot:

County Location	Project Name	Bond/Loan Amount	Recipient Agency	Est. Fee Lost (0.25%)
Thurston	Fieldstone Apartments	\$55,000,000	WSHFC	\$137,500
Pierce	Cedar Flats (Puyallup)	\$57,720,000	WSHFC	\$144,300
Pierce	35th & Pacific (Tacoma)	\$24,750,000	WSHFC	\$61,875
Snohomish	Apollo Edmonds Apts	\$50,720,000	WSHFC	\$126,800
Benton	Copper View Apts	\$42,135,000	WSHFC	\$105,335
Franklin	Silver Creek by Vintage	\$40,090,000	WSHFC	\$100,225
Spokane	4th Ave Housing	\$35,000,000	WSHFC	\$87,500
TOTAL	(Sample of 7 Projects)	~\$305,415,000		~\$763,535



Resolution #2026-03

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-03 A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES AUTHORIZING THE EXPLORATION AND FORMATION OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTIES FINANCE AUTHORITY.

WHEREAS, the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) is committed to enhancing the financial capacity and fiscal stability of its member counties; and

WHEREAS, an internal market analysis indicates that WSAC member counties are currently generating significant financial transaction fees that are being collected by state agencies or third-party entities; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors desires to capture this revenue to diversify the Association's funding sources and reduce reliance on member dues; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 39.34 RCW (Interlocal Cooperation Act) authorizes counties to create joint powers authorities for financing and issuing debt;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Washington State Association of Counties as follows:

Section 1. The Executive Director is authorized to investigate the formation of the "Washington Counties Finance Authority" (WCFA) to provide conduit issuance, equipment financing, and investment services to members.

Section 2. The Executive Director is authorized to issue Requests for Information (RFIs) to qualified financial and legal institutions to identify partners for said Authority.

Section 3. The Executive Director shall present a final Feasibility Report and Formation Documents to the Executive Committee no later than April 2026.

Approved by the Board of Directors of the Washington State Association of Counties on February 4, 2026.

Mark Ozias, WSAC President

Katie Walters, WSAC Second Vice President

February 4, 2026



STAFF REPORTS



February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors & Alternates
FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director Report

Since our November Board Meeting, the policy team has fully transitioned to session mode for the 2026 Legislative Session. We are actively executing our communications plan, advocating for our priorities in Olympia, and navigating the fast-paced dynamics of the short session.

We know that budget constraints remain a critical concern for counties across the state. Our focus during this session is to protect existing revenue streams and identify any possible avenues for relief in the supplemental budget.

We are also continuing to refine our internal operations to better serve you.

In December, your WSAC staff gathered for a retreat, a rare opportunity to see everyone together in person, though that was somewhat interrupted by the flooding event. We began updating our strategic plan and exploring new ways to support one another.

President Ozias and I hosted our counterparts from the PNW states (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon) to share insights into our organizations and policy programs. Earlier this month, we also traveled to DC for the NCCEA Presidents and Executives Conference and met with key staff for members of our delegation.

In addition to supporting our business development team, I've spent the last few months exploring the creation of a WSAC Finance corporation, which you can find more about in the memo and resolution elsewhere in your packet.

Staff Updates:

I am pleased to confirm that **Tiffin Moreno** has officially joined the team as our new Director of Finance and Administration. Tiffin started recently and is already managing our financial operations and administrative functions. Her expertise is a welcome addition as we navigate the new fiscal year.

Jessica Roth (Business Development and Communications Manager), **Mitch Netzer** (Senior Manager of Business Development & Communications), and **Jessica Strozewski** (Senior Manager of Member Experience) are settling into their new and expanded roles, ensuring our corporate partnerships and member services continue to grow.

Activities:

In addition to participating in and supporting work outlined in other WSAC Staff Reports, my primary activities have focused on the following since the November WSAC Board of Directors Meeting:

- **2026 Legislative Session Advocacy & Testimony**
- **Weekly Legislative Updates & Member Calls**
- **Federal Priority Agenda Development** (Preparation for NACo Legislative Conference)
- **New Business Partnership Development**
- **Health Trust Implementation & Management**
- **Finance Authority Research**
- **Litigation Program Implementation**
- **Public Defense Caseload Standards:** Ongoing legislative negotiations and response.

Partnership Activities I have continued to maintain regular contact and coordination with our key partners, including:

- White House Intergovernmental Affairs
- Washington State Auditor's Office
- Washington Attorney General's Office
- Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- Washington State Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
- Association of Washington Cities
- Washington Association of County Officials
- Association of Washington Business
- Washington Public Ports Association
- Office of the Governor
- Department of Children, Youth, and Families
- Office of Financial Management
- Washington State Association of County Engineers
- Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
- Foundational Public Health Services Steering Committee
- Washington County Administrators Association
- Business Partners
- County Road Administration Board
- Department of Commerce
- National Association of Counties
- NACo Edge



January 26, 2026

Washington State Association of Counties' 2026 Dues Assessments

At the WSAC Annual Membership meeting on November 20th, 2025, the membership adopted the proposed 2026 Annual Operating Budget and Strategic Litigation and Communication Budget. Eight separate dues assessments support these two budgets. Although there is redistribution among assessments and member counties. Below is a brief synopsis of each dues assessment.

Please note: the separate dues assessments are designed to prevent excessive strain on county general funds and generally align with WSAC staff workload. They are not for staff affiliate dues.

General Dues – Support the Association's general operations, including policy and legislative advocacy, finance and administration, communications, training and education, member services, and other business and program services.

Transportation Dues – Support the Association, with particular attention to public works, transportation, infrastructure, county roads, and related issues. Funds also support legislative advocacy and coordination, finance and administration, communications and training, and other business and program services.

Timber/Public Lands Dues – Support the work WSAC does with both state and federal public land issues:

- Supports state "Timber Counties" by working closely on issues related to the Department of Natural Resources' Forest Board Trust Lands, the Board of Natural Resources, the Forest Practices Board, and the Forest and Fish Policy;
- Supports advocacy and outreach efforts regarding Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT);
- Supports WSAC staff and WSAC member participation in the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region, Public Lands Steering Committee, and advocacy and outreach associated with funding for Federal Payments in Lieu of Taxes, Secure Rural Schools (SRS), and other public land, forest, and natural resource issues.

Human Services Dues – Provide funds for WSAC staff working directly on human services, behavioral health, developmental disabilities, veterans, housing and homelessness, and related issues.

County and Regional Planning Dues – Support our work on the Growth Management Act, Land use, shoreline management, and other specific work we do with the Legislature, state agencies, and other stakeholders on land use issues.

Solid Waste Dues – Supports initiatives related to disposals and recyclables to advance long-term programs that reduce waste, increase the viability of recycling and separation strategies, and build sustainable infrastructure. Provides input and guidance to the State and stakeholders to advocate for county priorities.

Coastal Counties Dues – This program creates a forum for Commissioners, Councilmembers, County Executives, and staff to interact, discuss, engage, and recommend positions on issues relating to the waters of Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and the Pacific Ocean. These dues go to support a contract to provide this dedicated support.

Strategic Litigation and Communication Dues (SLAC) – Provides funding to initiate work on the approved Litigation and Strategic Communication plan. The proposed work plan includes:

- Developing policies, procedures, and parameters for WSAC’s Litigation Program;
- Establishing and supporting a committee to guide litigation strategy development in conjunction with WSAC’s legislative strategy;
- Conducting research to support the legal strategy;
- Coordinating with partners, members, and others in making and pursuing litigation decisions;
- Submitting amicus briefs, coordinating county litigation, intervening in litigation, and serving as lead plaintiff to initiate litigation;
- Hiring a staff attorney to litigate cases WSAC chooses to pursue;
- Strategic communication on brand awareness, public awareness, and issue-specific priorities. A major focus will be on explaining WSAC’s actions when litigation is used.

We know these are difficult times for county budgets. This year, we are committed to generating new non-dues revenue through our new business development program and the creation of a new WSAC Health Trust. If successful, we anticipate reductions in dues assessments and other costs for our members.

As the Voice for Washington’s 39 Counties, the Washington State Association of Counties is committed to pursuing a comprehensive strategy to support county elected and appointed officials and their staff in fulfilling their constitutional and statutory duties to deliver public services to the citizens of Washington State.

If you have questions regarding WSAC’s 2026 Dues Assessments, please feel free to contact either myself or Tiffin Moreno.

Derek Young
Executive Director
(360) 999-0029
dyoung@wsac.org

Tiffin Moreno
Director of Finance and Administration
(564) 669-9754
tmoreno@wsac.org

TO: WSAC Board of Directors and Alternates

FROM: President Mark Ozias, Clallam County Commissioner

PREPARED BY: Paul Jewell, Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Policy and Legislative Update

HIGHLIGHTS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Worked with LSC to develop and adopt additions to the 2025-26 Legislative Agenda for the 2026 legislative session.
- Developed advocacy documents and policy proposals for the 2026 legislative session.
- Adopted updates to the WSAC Statement of Policy and Core Principles.
- Convened the Legislative Steering Committee before the start of the 2025 legislative session and provided training for new members and updates for continuing members.
- Analyzed the Governor's proposals for the 25-27 State Operating, Capital, and Transportation budgets and provided that analysis in written form for members.
- Reimplemented various legislative session updates and materials, including virtual updates every other Friday, legislative podcasts, online bill tracking, weekly Hot Sheet notifications, and regular affiliate updates.

CHALLENGES

- The state is facing another significant budget deficit in the 2026 legislative session (\$2.3 billion).
- 2026 will be a short legislative session, providing only 60 days to accomplish our priorities.
- A very aggressive and lengthy WSAC legislative agenda.
- Interacting effectively with legislative leadership while active litigation with the state over indigent defense funding.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The 2026 legislative session convened on 1/12/2026.
- Including counties in a likely legislative revenue package.
- The legislature has signaled an interest in addressing state and local government liability at some level ([SB 6239](#)).
- The Policy Team has been successful in finding legislative sponsors for each of our priorities.
- TIF reform priority bill: [HB 2451](#)
- Fiscal relief bills: [SB 6135](#) (binding arbitration) and [HB 2502](#) (local sales taxes), [HB 2566](#)

- (procurement flexibility)
- Public defense bills: [HB 1592/SB 5404](#)
- Housing bills: [HB 1345/SB 5404](#) (detached ADUs); [HB 2559](#) (STR tax), [HB 1206](#) (MFTE)
- Fiscal Sustainability bill: [HB 2442](#)

Legislative Activities and Progress

WSAC's policy staff is deeply engaged in the 2026 legislative session. We've maintained a similar work plan to last year, including LSC meetings in Olympia every two weeks, virtual legislative updates for all LSC members every other Friday, legislative podcasts, real-time updates to the online bill tracking sheets, and weekly internal policy staff meetings.

Staff are taking advantage of opportunities to serve as resources for legislators and legislative staff while supporting the issues identified in our 2025-26 Legislative Agenda. They actively monitor bills and legislative committees' work by providing testimony and working directly with legislative members and staff.

Paul Jewell, Government Relations Director

Since the last report, Paul has led the process to update the WSAC Statement of Policy and Core Principles (Policy Statement). The statement was reviewed in its entirety by members of the Legislative Steering Committee, led by various policy team staff members. It was also completely reorganized and redesigned to more accurately resemble typical WSAC documents and to make it more readable. Paul continues to coordinate the Policy Team's efforts, assigning portfolios and supervising work plans. Paul also manages his own policy portfolio, including general government, risk/liability, labor, public records, finance/taxes, water resources, and timber.

Paul also represents WSAC and collaborates with other Commissioners on the statewide Riparian Roundtable and Working Group. He coordinates meetings and planning for the Timber Counties and the Columbia River Counties caucuses.

Paul continues to coordinate the LSC's activities. The process for developing WSAC's 2025-26 legislative agenda update was successfully completed in the fall and presented to the LSC in November 2025. He plans and coordinates the LSC meetings with the LSC Co-Chairs, including the Wednesday evening roundtables and Thursday LSC business meetings.

Numerous bills have been introduced in this session, addressing various topics, including several WSAC priority bills. Some of the more impactful proposals that may get traction this session include:

- [HB 1960](#): Implementing a new excise tax for clean energy projects.
- [HB 2393](#) Correctional facility liability.
- [HB 2333/SB 6095](#) Political violence.
- [HB 2117/SB 5838](#) Adding a tribal member to the Board of Natural Resources.

Jaime Bodden – WSALPHO Managing Director

Organizational Updates

- WSALPHO's learning management system continues to increase in utilization and member engagement.
- Staff continue to hold monthly WSALPHO Board meetings and help facilitate and plan monthly meetings for the six WSALPHO standing committees: environmental public health, communicable disease, community health, executive leadership, health officers, assessment, and the emergency preparedness ad-hoc group.
- Staff continue working with the State DOH to identify and develop outreach, education, and coordination efforts for new public health staff, emerging public health issues (recent work has included workforce development and federal policy), statewide communications, and connecting to state technical assistance.
 - Co-host monthly LHJ Director calls.
 - Co-host monthly Executive Team calls to Executive Team calls.
 - In early January, staff helped plan and facilitate the first of a series of calls with DOH leadership, focusing on access to care, vaccines, and public health funding.
- In November, WSALPHO hosted a large-scale committee convening. This was the first time that committees were able to have a fall in-person gathering and dedicated days to discuss, learn, connect, and work on shared issues. Health Officers, Community Health, Communicable Disease, and Environmental Public Health met. Guest speakers from state agencies joined for specific topics such as solid waste, MTCA, early childhood development, and measles investigation.

Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS):

- WSALPHO continues to meet monthly with the governmental public health system on implementation, policy development, and funding strategies, taking a leadership role in meeting facilitation and agenda planning.
 - Staff participate in weekly project management meetings and state-local-tribal FPHS staff meetings, where they develop agendas for the steering committee meetings.
 - Staff continue to provide meeting support for the monthly hybrid steering committee meetings and host the WSALPHO board follow-up meeting.
 - WSALPHO staff continue facilitating monthly meetings for the five subject matter groups (SME).
- WSALPHO policy staff have continued to hone and refine FPHS enterprise processes. These efforts continue to center LHJs in key decisions, ensuring that accountability processes are not overly burdensome, are clear and concise, and LHJs are empowered to use FPHS as flexibly as possible.
- WSALPHO staff assisted in finalizing the 2025 FPHS Annual Investment Report, which includes spending data from each local health jurisdiction, highlights that feature specific LHJs in action, and additional system improvements.
- WSALPHO staff are working with LHJs to develop an evergreen reduction process, recognizing that additional FPHS funding cuts are a possibility. The FPHS Steering Committee will use this process to determine where, by how much, and which FPHS

investments should be reduced if more funding were to be cut from the State Operating Budget. The goal is to finalize and implement this process by March 2026.

- FPHS staff have also started their mid-year check-ins with LHJs around FPHS spending and technical assistance. These check-ins have helped identify improvements in FPHS outcomes at the LHJ agency level, as well as processes WSALPHO can implement with LHJs to better utilize the local portion of FPHS funding. As a result, LHJ “underspend”, or the FPHS funding that doesn’t get spent every year and gets returned to the Legislature, has decreased over time.
- FPHS staff are leading the creation of the Governmental Public Health System FPHS website. This involved improvements to spending and investment tracking (for a public-facing data dashboard) as well as stories of impact and FPHS 101. The website is expected to go live in the winter of 2026.

Legislative Session and Policy:

- WSALPHO is continuing to meet monthly with different partners, including local health jurisdictions, State DOH, Governor’s Office, non-profit organizations, and associations.
- WSALPHO continues to work with NACCHO’s Government Affairs staff to support their federal advocacy efforts around public health funding, particularly focusing on local health department funding.
 - WSALPHO is attending NACCHO’s Annual Leadership Meeting in DC this coming February. This event includes a Council of SACCHOs meeting (WSALPHO is a member) and Hill Day visits with the WA Congressional delegation. WSALPHO will be joined by the Big Cities Health Coalition and NALBOH for hill visits.
- WSALPHO continues to be an ex officio board member of the Washington State Public Health Association.
- The 2026 Legislative Priorities for WSALPHO were approved in November. The association is supporting two policy priorities and one budget priority. Policy priorities include preserving access to preventive services and extending the supervision period for on-site wastewater inspectors. The primary focus of the session will be the budget priority of maintaining FPHS funding. The Governor’s Budget proposal for an additional \$29 million reduction, combined with the shortage in the FPHS Account, is resulting in a nearly 40% reduction in FPHS funding. WSALPHO is working on policy fixes to address the Account shortfall and has developed several advocacy tools for members to use.
- Additional session bills that WSALPHO will be focusing on this session:
 - [HB 2183](#): extreme heat plans. WSALPHO is working on amendment language to improve the bill and address concerns shared by LHJs, WSEMA, and counties.
 - [HB 2439](#), [SB 6116](#), and [SB 6129](#) are different proposals that seek to address the FPHS Account shortfall. WSALPHO will work all three to negotiate the most advantageous outcome.
 - [SB 5990](#): WSALPHO offered language to provide consistency in qualifications for local health officers.

Workforce Development:

- WSALPHO continues to build and strengthen partnerships focused on workforce development. Staff are co-leading a steering committee with the DOH to help coordinate workforce development opportunities for the public health system.
- The final learning symposium was held in November at the Hilton in downtown Vancouver, WA. The focus of this symposium was communications and featured training on communication education, developing materials for different audiences, and risk communication.
- The second cohort for WSALPHO's New Leaders training continues to meet monthly, with two in-person meetings completed. The third meeting will be held in Snohomish County and will focus on budgeting, contracts, and public health funding. Recruitment is also underway for the third cohort participants – targeting new administrators/directors and other new leadership within LHJs.
- WSALPHO will host its first webinar training at the end of January. "AI and Public Health" will be a four-part webinar series offered January-April. Additional webinars will be planned for the rest of the year.
 - Workforce staff are also finalizing WSALPHO's biennial salary and workforce survey. This survey captures salary ranges, workforce challenges, best practices, and other information that WSALPHO and LHJs use to retain, recruit, and maintain a strong public health workforce.

Axel Swanson – WSACE Managing Director

As the Managing Director for WSACE, Axel has spent considerable time since November on legislative priorities. He continues managing administrative responsibilities for the WSACE Board while transitioning much of his daily routine toward working on legislation. As the 2026 legislative session has gotten underway, he has increased meetings with legislators and agency partners, as well as the time spent preparing testimony for bill hearings.

The 2026 session started fast with hearings on the Governor's proposed Budgets and bills proposing new ways to improve traffic safety and the emergency repair and replacement of culverts. Much like the 2025 session, there have also been hearings for bills proposing changes to the current public works procurement law, to include a WSAC priority bill to update and improve the county procurement statutes. Other topics include increasing Small Works Roster contract thresholds, prevailing wage, and ensuring prompt payment to contractors and subcontractors.

Over the past two months, WSACE has been helping prepare for the legislative session. The Managing Director has been working with other WSAC staff to finalize legislative priorities and strategies for the Association and to prepare for Legislative Steering Committee (LSC) meetings. Work has included reviewing the Governor's proposed budgets, participating in LSC planning meetings, scheduling meetings with legislators, reviewing pre-filed legislation, and managing shared folders and reports in the bill tracking software. Axel was also present for several work sessions during Legislative Committee Assembly Days in preparation for the session.

Going back to November, WSACE was incredibly happy with the outcomes of the County Leaders Conference, especially working with Chelan and Douglas counties on a presentation for the Joint

Transportation Committee. Axel continues to give presentations and update agencies and legislators regarding the state of county roads and infrastructure. Examples of recent presentations include the Joint Transportation Committee, the Washington State Transportation Commission, the Washington State Senate Transportation Committee, and the County Road Administration Board. WSACE also continues to track state and federal rulemaking processes to coordinate comments and be a voice for counties. Recent work has focused on preparing comments for the Department of Ecology's Bridge and Ferry Terminal Washing General Permit.

The Managing Director has been working with the WSACE Board and WSAC Communications staff to finalize the agendas and details for the Professional Development Conference in February and the Annual Conference in June, and we also look forward to meeting this spring again with the Oregon Association of County Engineers and Surveyors.

Brad Banks, Contractor – Behavioral Health, Public Safety, & Human Services

Brad's duties include handling a statewide policy portfolio that includes public safety, criminal justice and human services issues (behavioral health, developmental disabilities, adult and juvenile corrections facilities, and veterans and monitoring the Association of County Human Services (ACHS)).

Brad has been working on this session on advancing WSAC's priority work focused on jail healthcare costs and liability. This work will be a multisession effort, with this year's goal of securing a budget policy proviso to explore the viability of a state backed jail medical insurance liability pool. Additionally, Brad is working to further behavioral health crisis system changes that were set in motion by the passage of HB 1813, WSAC's 2025 priority legislation. Likewise, Brad is coordinating with budget leaders, the Health Care Authority, and the Governor's Office, on the issue of BHASO reserve levels and flexibility. Brad is working to facilitate the new HCA Director attending an LSC Wednesday evening roundtable discussion.

Brad is also supporting WSAC staff who leads on work related to tort reform this session.

Brad attends numerous stakeholder and partner meetings including:

- The Prevention Alliance
- Behavioral Health Lobbyists weekly meetings
- Weekly BHASO strategy meetings
- Joint Legislative & Executive Committee for Behavioral Health
- Substance Use Issue Lobbyists weekly meetings
- Public Safety Weekly Breakfast meeting

Likewise, Brad has represented WSAC and coordinated the Association's efforts on public safety and criminal justice issues and coordinating with Travis Dutton in the juvenile rehabilitation and corrections spaces. Continuing to build a strong relationship with our partners in the new Governor's policy team and at DCYF remains a priority.

Some key legislative proposals in the public safety and behavioral health space include:

- [HB 1228/SB 5880](#) Toxicology Testing (OPPOSE)

- [HB 2161/SB 5925](#) AGO Investigation Powers (OPPOSE)
- [HB 2389/SB 6062](#) Juvenile Offenses (OPPOSE)
- [HB 6296](#) Involuntary Treatment Act (SUPPORT)

In the Human Services area, Brad has worked closely with the Association of County Human Services (ACHS) on a variety of issues. In particular, Brad has supported the ACHS I/DD committee in the areas of employment and community inclusion. Brad is working on [SB 5681](#) which lowers the age for which clients may access employment and community inclusion services, which WSAC and ACHS both support. Additionally, Brad has coordinated with ACHS on their budget priorities.

Kelsey Hulse, Contractor – Land Use/GMA, Natural Resources, Economic Development, & Cannabis

Kelsey has spent the early part of the 2026 legislative session re-engaging on issues that have carried over for 2025 and tackling emerging concerns across her issue portfolio. Even though this is a “short” session, there is no shortage of ideas or ambition across the legislature.

[2HB 1303](#), for example, has been resurrected in the same form where it died during the 2025 session. The bill adds an Environmental Justice element to the SEPA process. We continue to be supportive of environmental justice but concerned that the bill’s impact on counties isn’t sufficiently mitigated.

[HB 2201](#) would require counties to “standardize” planning and development regulations within the UGA. In conversations with the sponsor, we highlighted that this type of annexation preparation only made sense if there was an obligation to annex on the part of the cities. Annexation is a complex issue, and we look forward to participating in a focused stakeholder conversation during the interim. We do not anticipate that the bill will move.

Other land use and economic development bills of interest include: [SHB 1057](#) Access to Federal Funds (SUPPORT), [HB 2316](#) - Shrubsteppe/Land Use (OTHER), [SB 6104](#) Protecting Agriculture (OPPOSE),

The second half of the biennium continues apace in the energy space. [HB 2496/SB 6010](#) attempts to improve tribal consultation with EFSEC, while [HB 2509](#) tries to improve the EFSEC application process. [SB 5466](#), which creates the Washington Electric Transmission Office, is BACK in 2026 and scheduled to be voted on this week (albeit slimmed down from its original form).

Salmon protection and habitat restoration continue to be a central issue, with bills focused on Anadromous Fish Recovery (HB 2598) and adding tribal members to the Fish and Wildlife Commission ([HB 2578](#)).

Kelsey continues to participate in the weekly planners’ group meetings, WSACRPD, and supports Curtis’s work in the Housing space.

Travis Dutton, Policy Coordinator – Environment, Solid Waste, Forest Health

Travis supports a statewide policy profile that includes solid waste, juvenile justice, behavioral healthcare, human services, forest health, climate change, clean energy, natural resources, and environmental issues. In recent months, he has primarily focused on facilitating the Washington Association of County Solid Waste Managers (WACSWM), supporting work on clean energy and property tax impacts, the SWISS Regional Partnership, and facilitating a statewide project to develop recommendations for how to update the state's laws on criminal insanity and competency to stand trial.

General

- Continuing representing counties on the Forest Health Advisory Committee and attending an in-person meeting and tour in Packwood, WA.

Juvenile Justice

- Travis has been working to increase awareness around county juvenile justice issues by meeting with county staff and touring county facilities.

WACSWM

- Conducted a three-day in-person meeting in November with WACSWM members and stakeholders.
- Refining and updating the WACSWM 2025-26 Legislative Agenda with members, including HB 2018, which was introduced late in the most recent session.
- Engaging with stakeholders to prepare for the 2026 legislative session and advocating for county solid waste needs, including [HB 2018](#).
- Continued representing WACSWM and counties in workgroups focused on food, hazardous waste, and rulemaking related to other waste streams.
- Currently developing a day-and-a-half program at the County Leaders Conference in November.

SWISS Regional Partnership

- Currently collaborating with SWISS members on completing strategic plan tasks, including:
 - Supporting the NS BH-ASO in completing a regional youth mental health needs assessment.
 - Reviewing and updating the strategic plan.
 - Coordinating a Legislative Lunch where SWISS members and their state legislators discuss priorities for the upcoming session.
- Next steps will be to support SWISS in developing regional talking points, working with partner organizations and other stakeholders.
- Continued facilitating quarterly SWISS meetings.
- Planning an in-person SWISS meeting at the County Leaders Conference in November.

CEPTI Task Force

- Travis has been supporting negotiations on [HB 1960](#), which was introduced during the 2025 legislative session.

Curtis Steinhauer, Policy Coordinator – Housing/Homelessness & Building/Permitting

Curtis supports a statewide policy portfolio that includes housing and homelessness, building and permitting, cybersecurity, and land use and planning. Curtis is also supporting Interim Executive Director Derek Young in advocacy for WSAC's 2025 legislative priority concerning county public defense services. In addition to his advocacy role, Curtis supports the entire policy team with research and data, coordinates communication with the Department of Commerce Local Government Fiscal Note Team and manages the WSAC Energy Audit Grant. Lastly, Curtis facilitates the Washington County Administrators Association, the Washington State Association of County and Regional Planning Directors, the Washington State Association of County Human Services subcommittee on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, and the WSAC American Rescue Plan Act Stakeholder Coalition.

Since the last report, Curtis has led the Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Building, and Permitting bills for the 2026 session. Several bills have come up in these areas that concern counties, including [HB 2269](#) concerning middle housing in LAMIRDs, [HB 2489](#) concerning public property regulations, [SB 5729](#) concerning Permitting Reform, [SB 6026](#) concerning residential uses in commercial and mixed-use zones, and [SB 6064](#) concerning administration of the International Fire Code. Curtis has worked to advocate for counties' interests in these pieces of legislation, successfully securing amendments to [HB 2269](#) and [HB 2489](#) to address county concerns with those bills.

Curtis has worked to support Derek Young on WSAC's priority bills, [SB 5404](#) and [HB 1592](#), concerning county public defense. Since the last meeting, Curtis has helped draft key bill language, coordinate stakeholder meetings, and gain for this proposal from House Appropriators.

In addition to advocacy, Curtis manages coordination between the Department of Commerce local government fiscal note team and WSAC staff to ensure timely and accurate fiscal projections for legislation across policy areas. Curtis also tracks legislation for and collects feedback from several affiliates during the session, including the Washington County Administrators Association, the Washington State Association of County Regional Planning Directors, and the Association of County Human Services subcommittee on Affordable Housing and Homelessness.

Finally, Curtis has continued to make progress on the WSAC Energy Audit Grant, working to collect data from all counties on their buildings progress in Clean Building Performance Standard compliance and granting funding requests to a dozen counties to directly fund compliance activities like benchmarking, energy planning, and energy audits.

February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors

FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director

PREPARED BY: Mitch Netzer, Senior Manager, Business Development and Communications

SUBJECT: Business Development and Communications Report

Communications

With the departure of the Operations and Finance Director and the hiring of a new Business Development and Communications position, this fall was an optimal time for a minor reorganization of the Operations Team. Bringing Business Development under Communications will streamline projects, tasks, and communications between staff and our corporate members. The team's primary areas of focus have been supporting Government Relations through communications collateral (print and digital), developing the public defense toolkit, publishing regular newsletters and podcasts, implementing a new project management system for the association, and updating and growing the Solutions Center.

County Connection Podcast

The County Connection Podcast ended season 1 at the end of 2025 with its 50th episode and began season 2 in 2026 with 7 episodes in the first week, with more in progress. Altogether, County Connection has received nearly 2,700 downloads across Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, iHeartRadio, Spotify, and others.

Strategic Litigation and Communications (SLAC)

Communications ramped up, overseeing marketing, branding, and messaging for the Public Defense (Indigent) suit. In the Fall of 2025, we engaged a contractor, Edie Jeffers, to develop a toolkit that WSAC and its members can use to message about the issue in a unified voice. The toolkit has been created, launched, and we hope to see membership begin using the various resources, such as op-eds, articles, social posts, and general talking points – all framed with uniform messaging!

Marketing and Newsletters

WSAC continues to maintain a presence on social media and recently launched a Bluesky account, while LinkedIn, Facebook, and the podcast remain our primary channels. The WAcounities Weekly continues to have solid open rates averaging 40% or more, along with click-through rates of 14-16%, demonstrating a steady year-over-year increase!

Project Management: Monday

As WSAC continues to deliver added value to members and operates in a hybrid environment, project complexity and communication have become more difficult to manage. In the Fall of 2025, staff began researching and experimenting with software solutions to improve workflow management, task tracking, and accountability. Near the end of 2025, the decision was made to implement Monday, an online solution that, although not yet fully implemented, has already made real progress in addressing the project management issue.

Business Development: Solutions Center

At the end of 2025 and into 2026, the WSAC Solutions Center underwent an overhaul of partner tiers, reducing tier options from 7, which was difficult to manage and made it hard for prospective partners to navigate which tier would best fit their needs. Tiers also started at \$1,000, and while they offered good solutions for counties, the ROI for staff was not sustainable. After researching other associations, new tiers were developed, offering partners \$5,000 (Gold), \$10,000 (Platinum), and \$15,000 (Diamond), along with a formalized revenue-sharing program for even higher-tier partners. The Solutions Center has already upgraded three corporate members (two at the Platinum tier, and one to Gold). We are excited for the future of the Solutions Center and the partnerships that it has and will bring to counties across Washington State!

New Trusted Partners:

- **Crowe:** Revenue Sharing
- **SentinelOne:** Revenue Sharing

New Corporate Members:

- **CORE EBT:** New Platinum Partner (\$10,000) **Waiting on payment*
- **WA State Office of Equity:** New Associate Partner (\$3,000) **Waiting on payment*

Upgraded Corporate Members:

- **DLR Group:** Upgraded to Platinum Partner (\$1,000 to \$10,000)
- **WCIF:** Upgraded to Platinum Partner (\$2,500 to \$10,000) **Waiting on payment*
- **McKinstry:** Upgraded to Gold Partner (\$1,500 to \$5,000) **Waiting on payment*



February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors

FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director

PREPARED BY: Jessica Strozewski, Senior Manager, Member Experience

SUBJECT: Member Services Report

Boards and Committees

WSAC tracks and submits nominations and appointments to around 100 statewide boards and committees. In 2025, we submitted nominations or appointments to the following boards, committees, and workgroups:

911 Advisory Committee
Affordable Housing Advisory Board
State Council on Aging
Washington Airport System Plan Project Advisory Committee
Bridge Advisory Committee
Building Code Council
County Design Standards Committee
County Road Administration Board
Criminal Justice Treatment Account Panel
Ecosystem Coordination Board
Emergency Management Council
Forensic Investigations Council
Forest Practices Board
Local Government Advisory Committee
Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety
Public Works Board
Shoreline Hearings Board
Voluntary Stewardship Program Statewide Advisory Committee
Winter Recreation Advisory Committee

Meetings and Events

WSAC continues to provide conference planning support to several affiliate organizations.

Below you will find the current list of in-person events WSAC staff will support in 2026:
Additional events may be added.

February 10-12 – WSACE Professional Development Conference (Chelan County)
March 18-20 – Road Design Conference – Hosted by CRAB (WSAC providing registration assistance only)
(Chelan County)

April 1-3 – WCAA Annual Conference (Chelan County)
May 12-13 – WSACRPD Annual Conference (Walla Walla County)
May 13-15 – WSAC Board of Directors Meeting and LSC Planning Meetings (Walla Walla County)
May 19-21 – WACSWM Spring Meeting (Chelan County)
June 2-4 – WSALPHO Summer Meeting (Spokane County)
June 9-11 – WSACE Annual Conference (Cowlitz County)
June 16-17 – WACSWM Annual Meeting, Kittitas County (Hotel Windrow)
August – Western States County Associations Staff Meet-Up (Hosted in Washington this year)
November 17-19 – County Leaders Conference (Pierce County)
December 7-10 – Newly Elected Officials Training in cooperation with WACO (King County)

County Leaders Conference

WSAC hosted the 2025 County Leaders Conference in Spokane County. Someone from all 39 counties attended the event, though our overall county attendance was lower than in past years, largely due to county travel budgets. We had a record number of sponsor/exhibitor attendees. There were 388 total attendees inclusive of counties, state agencies, sponsors, exhibitors, and others.

The 2026 conference will be in Pierce County at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center. We anticipate greater attendance, more opportunities for special guests, and increased sponsor/exhibitor registrants. Save-the-date for November 17-19!



County Development Institute of Washington

We plan to audit our current course offerings and strategize on how to increase engagement. You can currently take a 10-course series to receive your Certified Public Official designation as well as a range of non-credit courses on various topics of interest to county leaders.

[County Development Institute of Washington \(cdiwa.org\)](http://cdiwa.org)

Membership Survey

In an effort to improve our offerings to members, WSAC will distribute a short membership survey to all members in early Spring. Please look out for that survey and take a few minutes to provide your feedback.

February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors

FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director

PREPARED BY: Paul Jewell – Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Timber Counties Caucus

BACKGROUND

The Timber Counties Caucus was created as a forum for elected county legislative authority members, Executives, and staff within the 29 timber counties to interact, discuss, engage, and recommend WSAC positions on issues relating to:

- Federal land management;
- Department of Natural Resources Management of state forest lands, including county trust lands;
- Forest Practices Board (FPB) regulations;
- Wildland fire management and control;
- County relationships with state and federal agencies and other related stakeholders regarding forest land management issues and
- We provide input to the NACO Public Lands Steering Committee on all issues relevant to Washington's counties.

The 29 Timber Counties include Asotin, Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Columbia, Cowlitz, Ferry, Garfield, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Stevens, Thurston, Wahkiakum, Whatcom, & Yakima.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- The Timber Counties Caucus met quarterly in 2025. Caucus members received regular reports from staff and county representatives on statewide boards, including the Board of Natural Resources (BNR), the Forest Practices Board, the Timber, Fish, & Wildlife (TFW) Policy Committee, the Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research (CMER) Committee. All meetings were well attended. Members also received updates regularly from DNR. The Caucus also received presentations from various groups, including the USFS, NACo, and others. Frequent topics included forest carbon, the Northwest Forest Management Plan update by the USFS, wildland fire, DNR's outdoor recreation plan, and the trust land transfer program.
- WSAC continued the Timber 101 training program with a new presentation at each Caucus meeting. Mark Meleason, WSAC's CMER Representative, presented a series on forest riparian zones and their value in the forest ecosystem. Topics included recent polling data on active forest management practices, the Eastern Washington Sustainable harvest calculations, Clallam County's revenue advisory committee, and Commissioner Upthegrove's plan for trust land management. Each training session was recorded and placed on WSAC's website.
- The legislature appropriated another \$23 million of Climate Commitment Act funding to conserve and replace structurally complex, carbon-dense forests and purchase replacement State Forestlands for encumbered State Forestlands for 4 counties – Clallam, Pacific, Skamania, and Wahkiakum, among other things in the 2025 State Capital Budget.

- The Timber Counties Caucus elected a new representative to the state Board of Natural Resources. Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson was elected to replace outgoing Board member Skagit County Commissioner Lisa Janicki.
- Governor Ferguson also appointed a new member representing counties to the Forest Practices Board. Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour was selected to replace outgoing Grays Harbor County Commissioner Vickie Raines.
- Dr. Mark Meleason was hired by WSAC to represent the County Governments Caucus (County Caucus) on the Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Committee (CMER). CMER was established within the Adaptive Management Program to oversee the science used to evaluate Forest Practice rules. Duties as a CMER member included the following:
 - Represented the County Caucus as a voting member at CMER's monthly meetings.
 - Voted on all phases of CMER's scientific studies – from scoping to final reports (please refer to the AMP Dashboard for CMER project descriptions at: <https://dnr.wa.chariotcreative.com>).
 - Participated in CMER workgroups such as the Schedule L-1 Project and Structure Decision Making Riparian Project. Both are considered high-priority projects in the Adaptive Management Program.
 - Involved in the technical dispute concerning the conclusions in the study, *Effectiveness of Experimental riparian buffers on perennial non-fish-bearing streams on competent lithologies in western Washington – Phase 3 (Fifteen years after harvest)*. Following the procedures outlined in section 22 of the Forest Practices Board Manual, an arbitration panel of qualified independent scientists has been formed to resolve this technical dispute.
 - Represented the County Caucus on several Science Advisory Groups (SAG)
 - Instream SAG: He served as a workgroup member in three ISAG studies: *Default Physical Criteria study* and the *Potential Habitat Break study*, which has been in the implementation phase since 2025, and the *Anadromous Fish Floor study*, which has reached the study design phase.
 - Landscape and Wildlife SAG: He served as a workgroup member of the *Water Temperature and Amphibian Use in Np Waters with Discontinuous Flow in Western Washington Project*. The study design has been approved and is now in review by an Independent Scientific Review panel (ISPR).
 - Riparian SAG: He was a workgroup member in two RSAG studies. The first was the *Extensive Riparian Status and Trends Monitoring Program – Riparian Vegetation and Stream Temperature*. This has progressed to the development of the study design. The second was the *Riparian Characteristics and Shade Response Experimental Research Study*, which has been in the implementation phase since 2024.
 - Provided monthly updates directly to the Government Relations Director of WSAC.
 - Provided updates on CMER activities at the Timber Counties Caucus meetings.
 - Provided the final two of a planned three-part presentation series at a Timber Counties Caucus meeting titled “An Introduction to Stream and Riparian Ecology and Management in Washington”.
- Court Stanley, a contractor, continued to represent WSAC on the TFW Policy Committee while monitoring the Adaptive Management Program (AMP) activities. However, Court will scale back his work with WSAC and the TFW Policy Committee in 2026.

- Eric Johnson, a contractor, is joining the WSAC team to replace Court Stanley on the TFW Policy Committee and will also take on the responsibilities for monitoring the AMP activities and supporting our representative on the Forest Practices Board.
 - New buffer rules for non-fish perennial streams approved by the FPB in 2023 were adopted by the Forest Practices Board for private forestlands. Landowners are concerned that the new rules exceed agency authority and have filed a lawsuit.
 - New rules regarding determining the end of fish habitat and an anadromous fish floor are also being written. The FPB, by a majority vote, decided that the current methodology, with minor changes, was appropriate until studies on the anadromous fish floor and habitat breaks were completed. Commissioner Raines took a huge leadership role in guiding the board to this decision. Public comments are now being heard, and the board will vote to take CR102 for the next stage in rulemaking.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Environmental organizations have developed a solid effort to stop logging “legacy forests” on state forest lands. Legacy forests are naturally regenerated forests over 60-70 years old. Commissioner Upthegrove issued an Executive Order setting aside an additional 77,000 acres of structurally complex, carbon dense “legacy forests.” Still, environmental organizations continue to challenge timber sales they claim contain “legacy forests.”
- Continue advocating for funding the encumbered lands counties for operating revenue and state forestland replacements.
- A new administration at the DNR after eight years under Commissioner Hilary Franz.

2026 ACTIVITIES

- Continued involvement and representation on CMER, TFW Policy, the FPB, and the BNR.
- Monitoring several important ongoing issues, including:
 - Ecosystem services being marketed on trust lands;
 - Ongoing efforts to conserve additional acres of “legacy forests;”
 - Land acquisition to utilize the funding secured for encumbered lands;
 - The impact of legal action filed against the Np buffer rulemaking process;
 - The impact to the finances of DNR from reduced timber harvest;
 - Ongoing conversations with counties regarding the potential for reconveyance of state forestlands.
- Developing a relationship with newly-elected Commissioner of Public Lands Dave Upthegrove.

Paul Jewell, Policy Director – Water, Land Use, Natural Resources, & Environment

Court Stanley, Contractor – WSAC TFW Policy Committee Representative

Mark Meleason, Contractor – WSAC CMER Committee Representative

February 4, 2026

TO: WSAC Board of Directors

FROM: Derek Young, Executive Director

PREPARED BY: Paul Jewell, Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Columbia River Program

BACKGROUND

The Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development Program was initiated by the state Legislature in 2006. The program aims to seek out and develop a new water supply in eastern Washington. New water supplies are intended for both in-stream and out-of-stream use; water from program-funded projects is allocated one-third for in-stream use and two-thirds for out-of-stream use.

WSAC receives funding from the Department of Ecology to provide staff support to Eastern Washington County Commissioners (above the Bonneville Dam per statute). This allows commissioners to participate as full partners in the program. Part of the funding is used to support staff for county participation. General program activities include:

- Organizing quarterly meetings of county commissioners (called the Columbia River Caucus).
- Assisting the four commissioners who are county members of the overall Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (CR-PAG); and
- Serving as a point of contact for county commissioners and staff about Columbia River issues.

The Columbia River program was authorized for ten years, beginning in 2006. The legislature appropriated \$200 million in state bonding capacity for implementation. This original funding was fully allocated by the end of the 15-17 biennium (June 30, 2017). Since then, the Office of Columbia River (OCR) has requested (and primarily received) appropriations for specific projects in each biennium.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Lincoln County Commissioner Jo Gilchrist was appointed the new caucus chair in 2025.
- We continue to follow how negotiations between the U.S. and Canada (the Columbia River Treaty) may affect the provision of additional water supply.
- We continue to ensure that counties have a voice in Ecology's management of the CR Program.
- The caucus elected new representatives to the Columbia River Policy Advisory group.
- Caucus members met four times during 2025. Members received regular updates from WSAC and Ecology staff on programming matters. Other topics relevant legislative proposals, water banking, Columbia River operations, exempt well use and municipal water law, the impact of server farms, an update on the Odessa Aquifer Groundwater Replacement Project, planning for climate resiliency strategies, and others.
- Caucus members welcomed the new Office of Columbia River Director Larry Mattson, who replaced retiring OCR Director Tom Tebb.

- Quarterly meetings of the Commissioners' PAG continue to be held. They are vital to ensuring the flow of information from county commissioners to the CR-PAG and the Department of Ecology.
- Regular discussions and meetings with the Director of the Office of Columbia River occur several times a year.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- As noted, the original \$200 million for the CR Program was fully allocated by June 2017. Instead, funding is requested for each biennium for a smaller, specific slate of projects. To date, this has been a successful approach for continued funding (which most stakeholders agree is needed). WSAC will need to track this.
- The U.S. Department of State has been engaging with Canada about revising the Columbia River Treaty and reached an agreement in principle in 2024. Counties continue to hope that the possibility of increasing water supply will be included as a negotiation topic.
- Monitoring and influencing ongoing agency interpretations of existing water law.

2026 ACTIVITIES

- Continued involvement in implementing the current CR Program and support requests for funding continued project work.
- Monitor and engage in deliberations around the Columbia River Treaty.
- Conduct quarterly meetings.
- Conduct a field tour in June for WSAC members of the Columbia River Basin water supply projects.