



WASHINGTON
STATE ASSOCIATION
of **COUNTIES**

2024-25 WASHINGTON STATE
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Annual Report

Who We Are

The Voice of Washington Counties

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

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

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

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

Table of Contents

2	Who We Are	25	Coastal Counties Caucus
4	Communication & Member Services	26	Timber and Public Lands Program
5	Member Engagement	28	Solutions Center Directory
6	Advocacy & Legislative Affairs	34	2024-25 Financial Health
7	2025 Bill Outcomes and Budget	36	Staff Directory
19	2025 Legislative Priorities	38	WSAC Executive Committee
24	Columbia River Caucus		



COUNTY CONNECTION

The County Connection is the official podcast of the Washington State Association of Counties, where we dive into the legislative issues of the day. For more in-depth discussion on what's happening in Olympia during the session, check out our library of discussions on everything from budgets to public safety, infrastructure to housing, and more.

When the session is over, listen for great discussions about innovative programs counties are implementing across the state for law enforcement, criminal diversion, housing, public health, water resource management, environmental programs, and more.

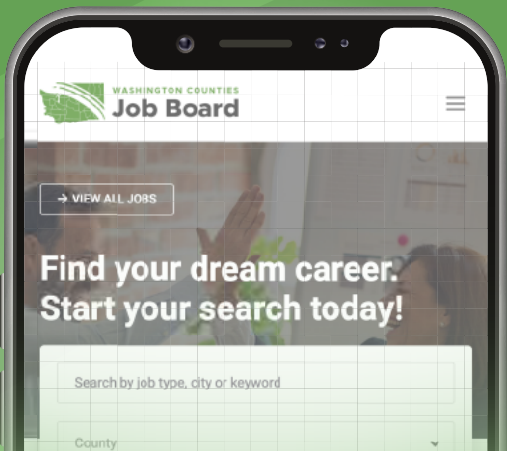
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Communication & Member Services

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

2024-25 Key Accomplishments



Solutions Center

The WSAC Solutions Center completed a comprehensive restructuring of its partner tier framework to better align the value delivered to corporate partners with the solutions they provide to our county members. This effort also included the addition of dedicated staff support and enhanced marketing benefits to strengthen partner engagement and visibility.

PROJECTS of IMPACT

Projects of Impact Awards

This initiative shines a light on well-deserved, county projects that have made a real difference in their communities. In the first year, 30 submissions were received from nine counties. At the 2025 County Leaders Conference, seven projects were recognized.



County Connection Podcast

The County Connection Podcast ended season 1 at the end of 2025 with its 50th episode. Altogether, County Connection has received over 3,000 downloads across Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, iHeartRadio, Spotify, and others.

2024-25 Analytics and Statistics



FACEBOOK

2,961 Page Likes



LINKEDIN

1,758 Followers



INSTAGRAM

818 Followers



MEETINGS

16 Virtual Assemblies
56 Hybrid Meetings



WSAC WEBSITE

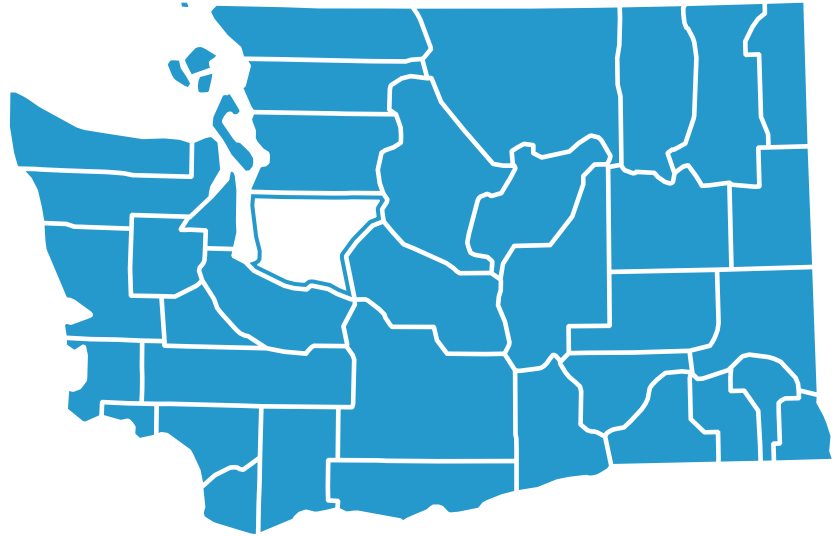
229,231 Page Views
181,508 Website Visitors

Member Engagement



38/39

counties are active members of WSAC and NACo



100%

of counties were represented at the 2024 County Leaders Conference

388 Total Attendees

270 Paid Registrants

39 Sponsors / Exhibitors



60

WSAC Member Meetings

4 Board Meetings

10 Legislative Steering Committee Meetings

16 Virtual Assemblies

Advocacy & Legislative Affairs

2025 Legislative Session Overview

January 13, 2025, marked the start of a new biennial legislative session in Washington State. As the first year of the two-year session, it lasted 105 days, culminating on Sunday, April 27th. The “long” session included the adoption of new, two-year State Operating, Capital, and Transportation Budgets, as well as several key policy proposals.

The state operating budget included significant cuts to programs that will impact counties. However, the cuts were less severe than initially feared. The operating and transportation budgets also included about \$4.4 billion in new funding from targeted tax increases, some of which may significantly benefit counties, including the Governor’s request for \$100 million for grants for local law enforcement.

During The 2025 Legislative Session 1,905 Bills Were Introduced;



LSC Members
Met Bi-Weekly
In Olympia



105 Day
LEGISLATIVE
SESSION



422 Bills
PASSED THE
LEGISLATURE



1 Bill
VETOED

9 Bills
PARTIAL
VETOES

BILL OUTCOMES AND BUDGET →

2025 Bill Outcomes and Budget

General Government

Labor Relations

HB 1002 would have classified post-traumatic stress disorder as a presumptive occupational disease for county coroners and medical examiners.

WSAC Position: NEUTRAL Outcome: **FAILED**

HB 1070 would have classified post-traumatic stress disorder as a presumptive occupational disease for correctional officers.

WSAC Position: NEUTRAL Outcome: **FAILED**

E2SHB 1213 expanded state-paid family and medical leave benefits to employees after 6 months.

WSAC Position: NEUTRAL Outcome: **PASSED**

SSB 5040 removed the threshold exempting uniformed personnel in counties under 10,000 population from interest arbitration rights.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

HB 1622 would have required employers to negotiate with employee bargaining units before adopting new technology containing artificial intelligence under certain circumstances.

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

ESSB 5041 granted striking or locked-out union workers unemployment insurance benefits, including public employees, unless a final judgment declares the strike illegal.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

SSB 5503 prevents employers from requiring a worker to waive any statutory right to make a claim arising out of state or federal law as a condition of settling a grievance.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

Taxes

SHB 1791 correlates the allowed uses of REET 1 & 2 funds and makes permanent the allowances for maintenance and operation of capital projects and affordable housing.

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

HB 2049 would have replaced the 1% annual property tax growth limit with a limit based on the rate of inflation plus the county population growth rate, not to exceed 3% per year.

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

SHB 1650 allows counties to utilize REET funds for capital projects at county-owned airports.

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

HB 1702 would have authorized counties to collect a 3% tax on utilities from providers servicing unincorporated businesses and residents.

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

Finance

HB 1042 would have authorized county treasurers to recover their costs for providing services.

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

HB 1044 would have replaced the current \$5 filing fee on a real estate excise tax affidavit with a new \$20 fee, to be increased every four years based on inflation.

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

Risk Management

HB 1380 would have required counties that regulate access to public spaces to be objectively reasonable as to time, place, and manner.

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

SB 5098 would have made the possession of a weapon in all park facilities at which children are likely to be present, county buildings, and county fairs. Counties would have been required to post signs informing attendees of the law.

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

Administration

SB 5154 would have modified the county auditor duties in law.

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

SB 5288 removed the portions of state law (RCWs 36.32.070 and 36.32.0558) that conflict with the Washington State Constitution related to vacancies on boards of county commissioners.

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

Elections

HB 1030 would have provided only two options to fulfill post-election audit requirements: a limited hand-count audit or a risk-limiting audit.

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

HB 1146 would have required counties to create a voting plan for each jail and hospital in the county. Jails would have been required to implement the plan and provide voting services to inmates.

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

HB 1710 would have required certain counties to obtain preclearance that certain proposed changes to their election systems will not diminish the ability of a protected class to participate in the political process or elect their preferred candidates.

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

ESSB 5014 requires counties to implement certain requirements from the Secretary of State to meet election security standards.

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



GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Budget Highlights

\$10 million for assistance in accessing federal tax incentives and grants.

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

Core funding for the Municipal Research Services Center.

All state-shared revenues are maintained, including liquor taxes and profits, cannabis excise tax, streamlined sales tax, county criminal justice assistance, and city-county assistance.

\$23 million for developing community electric vehicle infrastructure.

Transportation & Infrastructure



Safety and Operations

HB 1145 would have required counties to collect and maintain records related to almost all county maintenance or construction activity on county roads.

WSACE Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

SB 5215 would require vehicles operating on a paved public highway and carrying a load of dirt, sand, pebbles, cobbles, gravel, or any aggregate material to be covered beginning January 1, 2028.

WSACE Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

SB 5319 increases surface mine reclamation permit fees.

WSACE Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**

ESSB 5627 modifies several requirements in the Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act relating to, in part, notice before excavation, duties before and during excavation, and duties when excavation causes damage to certain underground infrastructure.

WSACE Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**



Public Works Procurement

SB 5176 aimed to ensure prompt payment to contractors and subcontractors.

WSACE Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

E2SHB 1549 adds additional responsible bidder requirements for contractors and requires them to submit an Apprenticeship Utilization Plan for certain public works projects.

WSACE Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**

SB 5061 required that public works contracts stipulate that the hourly minimum wage for laborers, workers, or mechanics must be adjusted each year to be at least the latest prevailing rate in effect at the time the work is performed. The bill excluded Small Works Roster projects.

WSACE Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **FAILED**

Infrastructure Revenue

SB 5804 would have redirected revenue sources currently distributed into the Public Works Assistance Account and instead deposited them into the state General Fund. The bill authorized the issuance of special tax obligation bonds in a total amount of \$5 billion and dedicated the proceeds to projects that improve salmon and steelhead recovery and habitat restoration.

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

Transportation Planning

SB 5374 would have amended RCW 36.81.121, requiring counties to coordinate with tribal governments when preparing the county's Comprehensive Transportation Program.

WSACE Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE Budget Highlights

\$365 million for the Public Works Board to award new or reimburse previously authorized grants and loans to local governments for infrastructure projects.

\$42 million over six years in new Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax distribution to counties.

\$32 million for Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board Projects.

\$22 million to extend the Federal Fund Exchange Pilot Program through the 2025-27 biennium.

\$21 million starting in the 2027-29 biennium for the new CRAB Local Road Program.

\$21 million additional in the 2027-29 biennium for TIB Complete Streets Program.

\$114 million to provide matching funds to public or tribal government lead entities for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grants.

\$5.5 million to continue the Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Program for 2025-27.

\$2.8 million over six years in new Gross Vehicle Weight Fee distributions to San Juan and Island counties.

\$400 thousand to continue work on the Fish Passage Barrier Optimization Model.

Housing

HOUSING

HB 1818/SB 5633 proposed a rewrite to Chapter 58.17 RCW, overhauling the current state statute governing the parcel subdivision process.

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

2SHB 1183 requires local governments to allow intrusion into setbacks for passive housing development, prohibits local governments from requiring façade modulation or upper-level setbacks for various housing types, and prohibits local governments from requiring off-street parking for certain housing developments if the adjacent road is developed to a city standard.

WSAC position: NEUTRAL Outcome: PASSED

SB 5729 would have removed the ability to review project permits for completeness, required approval of any permit that included more than three requests for information from a local government, and prohibited a local government from requiring project permits for specific projects involving an existing structure.

WSAC position: OPPOSE Outcome: FAILED

HB 1717/SB 5591 would have created a sales tax remittance program for affordable housing developments in which the local jurisdiction where the development occurs receives 50% of the state sales tax revenue associated with the project to be used for local homeless housing or affordable housing programs.

WSAC position: SUPPORT Outcome: FAILED

SHB 1899 removes the statutory requirement that the Point-In-Time Count of homeless individuals be conducted annually, providing administrative and financial relief for county housing programs.

WSAC position: SUPPORT Outcome: PASSED

HB 1858 requires financial institutions to pay a document recording fee when transferring mortgages or deeds of trust, generating significant new revenue for local homeless housing programs.

WSAC position: SUPPORT Outcome: PASSED

 HOUSING
Budget Highlights

\$215 million for the new construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation of affordable housing projects for low-income and special needs populations.

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

\$10 million to acquire, renovate, and prepare real property for rapid conversion into enhanced emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, youth housing, tiny homes, or shelters.

\$117.6 million to backfill the shortfall in local document recording fees.

\$50 million for affordable housing for low-income people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

\$50 million for affordable housing preservation projects.

\$75 million to develop home ownership projects that are affordable for first-time low-income households.

\$111 million to maintain or increase current emergency housing capacity.

\$62 million for operation, maintenance, and service costs of permanent supportive housing projects.

\$297.37 million for Housing and Employment case management services funded through the 1115 Medicaid waiver.

Natural Resources, Environment, & Land Use

Land Use

E2SSB 5148 sets up a process by which counties may submit the housing element of their comprehensive land use plan and any implementing ordinances to the Department of Commerce for review and a determination of compliance. Jurisdictions that do not voluntarily submit to the review process may be chosen for targeted review.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

ESHB 1135 requires that the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) may not find a local government in compliance unless the local government has amended the portion of its plans or regulations that were found noncompliant, and the amendments addressing the noncompliance finding are compliant with the requirements of the GMA.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

HB 1303 would have added an “Environmental Justice Element” to the SEPA process using definitions and standards developed in the 2021 HEAL Act.

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

HB 1057 would have created support for counties to access grant writing and matching funds. It would have prioritized rural and frontier counties.

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

HB 1443 would have required local jurisdictions to allow one additional mobile dwelling per residential lot with certain requirements.

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

ESSB 5184 prohibits counties (in areas where roads are built to city standards) from requiring more than 0.5 parking spots per multifamily unit or one spot per single-family home. Jurisdictions may not require parking spots for buildings undergoing a change of use from nonresidential to residential, residences under 1200 square feet, commercial buildings under 3000 square feet, affordable housing, senior housing, childcare facilities, or ground-level nonresidential units in mixed-use developments.

WSAC Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **PASSED**

Cannabis

HB 1346 and **HB 1940** presented opportunities to create consistency among licensing circumstances for retailers, producers, and processors, requiring consideration of local codes and regulations.

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

HB 1835 would have better aligned cannabis licensing decisions with local zoning ordinances.

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

 **Water**

HB 1947 provides that new group B public water systems are not required to be owned or operated by a satellite management agency unless it provides fire flow, has atmospheric storage, serves ten or more connections, or must provide treatment to meet water quality standards.

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

ESSB 5303 extended the water supply milestone for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to 2035.

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

SHB 1670 directs the Department of Ecology to create a public website for providing information about sewage spills.

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

SB 5660 would have made it possible for more properties to have access to water and sewer systems.

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

 **Solid Waste Management**

E2SSB 5284 will create an extended producer responsibility program for paper and packaging products, beginning in 2030.

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

2SHB 1497 creates color and labeling requirements for solid waste carts and other containers.

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

HB 2018 was introduced on behalf of WSAC and would have increased the current Solid Waste Collection Tax by 2.5% gradually over five years. The revenue would be directed to counties to implement their Solid Waste Management Plans.

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

2SHB 1154 provides local health jurisdictions financial enforcement tools for solid waste handling facilities. It creates a mechanism for a local public health jurisdiction to defer enforcement to the Department of Ecology (Ecology) if needed, as well as the opportunity for Ecology to enforce without deferral if it deems the local health response inadequate.

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

HB 1607/SB 5502 would have created a deposit return program for qualifying beverage containers.

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

Energy

HB 1847 would have exempted distributed energy resources and community solar projects from SEPA requirements and prohibited counties from excluding agrivoltaics from designated agricultural resource lands.

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

HB 1960 would have exempted commercial solar and wind energy projects from personal property tax, replacing it with a nameplate capacity tax.

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

SSB 5359 would have established a clean energy development office within the Department of Commerce to, among other things, provide assistance to local governments for the siting and development of clean energy projects.

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

Timber

HB 1508 would have authorized the Department of Natural Resources to market ecosystem service projects on state trust lands for afforestation, reforestation, and aquatics projects.

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

NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, & LAND USE Budget Highlights

\$23 million to assist the DNR in acquiring working forestlands to replace structurally complex, carbon-dense forested state trust lands designated for conservation and for existing encumbered state forestlands.

\$100 million for the Connecting Housing to Infrastructure (CHIP) grants.

\$22.544 million to assist local government climate planning implementation.

\$18 million for local comprehensive land use planning updates.

\$5 million to Commerce to support siting and permitting clean energy projects.

\$24 million from MTCA for Local Solid Waste Financial Assistance funding to local governments.

Public Health

Public Health

HB 1947 lets new Group B public water systems operate on their own—without needing to be run by a satellite system management agency—as long as they meet certain conditions. This was a WSALPHO priority bill.

WSALPHO Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

SSB 5163 provides important updates to local child fatality review statutes. These reviews identify community strategies that can prevent further death and injury for our youth. Updates include increasing the youth age to 19, aligning privacy and confidentiality to national standards, and emphasizing coordination between local and state agencies. This was a WSALPHO priority bill.

WSALPHO Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

SB 5605 would have authorized the operation of private home kitchens to prepare food sold to the public and set permit responsibilities to local health departments and the state board of health. The proposal also exempted home kitchens from several food safety requirements.

WSALPHO Position: **OPPOSE** Outcome: **FAILED**

HB 1870 authorized counties to implement a property tax solely for the purposes of operating public health clinics such as prevention care, STI clinics, immunization clinics, etc.

WSALPHO Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **FAILED**

SB 5244 exempts the MA licensure requirements for staff to conduct simple blood tests like finger or heel sticks at WIC clinics as part of the program requirements. This allows for any WIC program staff trained to conduct this screening service. The change provides better customer service for participating families and addresses some workforce challenges that impact the ability to operate local WIC clinics.

WSALPHO Position: **SUPPORT** Outcome: **PASSED**

ESHB 1946 clarifies tribal representation for local boards of health, removes the American Indian Health Commission from the appointment process, narrows organizational membership, and directs the State Board of Health to conduct rulemaking on appointment timelines and processes.

WSALPHO Position: **NEUTRAL** Outcome: **PASSED**



PUBLIC HEALTH

Budget Highlights**Foundational Public Health Services**

(FPHS): Funding for FPHS was reduced by **\$24 million** for the biennium. This is largely reflected in reductions in General Funds State which totaled **\$44 million** for the biennium (split evenly as **\$22 million** reductions each fiscal year). These reductions are offset by an increase of **\$20 million** of FPHS Account spending authorization. Depending on the total FPHS Account balance, each FY year is reduced **\$12-\$22 million**. Preserving FPHS funding was a WSALPHO Budget Priority.

School-Based Health Centers: Both Operating and Capital Budgets including support to operate and maintain school-based health centers. These facilities are becoming more critical health care access points for youth behavioral health services, dental clinics, and other preventative primary care services. Total including in the budget: **\$2.4 million** – Operating Budget and **\$2.6 million** – Capital Budget.

Opioid Response/Support: This year's budget made several reductions in opioid response and overdose prevention, focusing state support and investment on fulfilling state obligations.

- Community-based and harm reduction approaches to overdose prevention were removed. These include a naloxone stockpile, community education campaigns, and sustainable funding for a data dashboard.
- Funding to support Health Engagement Hubs was reduced by **\$500 thousand**. Hubs are intended to serve as an all-in-one location where people who use drugs can access a range of medical, harm reduction, treatment, social services, and referrals.

- **\$2.7 million** is dedicated to launch a tele-buprenorphine hotline that facilitates access to medications for opioid use disorder treatment.
- Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are designed to ensure access to coordinated, comprehensive behavioral health care. CCBHCs are required to get people into care quickly and serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use — regardless of ability to pay, place of residence, or age. This includes developmentally appropriate care for children and youth. **\$886 thousand** was dedicated to supporting CCBHCs.
- The Recovery Care Navigator Program, implemented locally by counties, is an intensive outreach and case management program was reduced by 20%.

Group B Water Systems: Ongoing funding has supported local health jurisdictions that maintain local Group B programs. This funding was reduced to **\$832 thousand**, a reduction of **\$152 thousand**. These funds are used to support the costs of the development and adoption of rules, policies, and procedures, as well as for technical assistance, training, and other program-related costs.

Home Visiting: This is a valuable program where nurses and parents work together to strengthen and support a child's first year of life. This program was reduced by **\$6 million**.

Public Safety & Human Services



Public Safety

ESHB 2015 creates a Local Law Enforcement Grant Program to be administered by the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) and authorizes a new local 0.1 percent sales and use tax for criminal justice purposes.

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

2SHB 1359 establishes a task force to review and make recommended changes to laws related to criminal insanity and competency to stand trial. Also recodifies sections of law relating to criminal insanity and competency to stand trial under topical subject headings. WSAC is directed and funded to manage the task force.

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

SHB 1811 adds individuals engaged in co-response services to the list of first responders who may not be compelled to testify about their communications with recipients of peer support services. Also adds members of first response teams engaged in co-response during a public health emergency to the definition of “frontline employees” to presume that an infectious or contagious disease was acquired during employment under the Workers’ Compensation program.

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

E2SSB 5278 concerned the management of individuals who are placed in juvenile rehabilitation institutions.

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

SB 5296 attempted to address and improve outcomes for individuals adjudicated for juvenile offenses by increasing opportunities for community placement options and refining procedural requirements. The bill largely shifted program and service responsibility, as well as funding obligations, from the state to the counties.

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

 **Human Services**

HB 1218 was concerned with persons referred for competency evaluation and restoration services.

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

HB 1158 required the Department of Social and Health Services Developmental Disabilities Administration to contract directly with service providers for the delivery of community inclusion services.

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

E2SSB 5745 deals with legal representation under the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA). It addresses requirements and procedures for appointing defense counsel. It also defines “state facilities” and specifies that the Attorney General represents state facilities in ITA proceedings.

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

E2SHB 1813 concerned the reprourement of medical assistance services, including the realignment of behavioral health crisis services for medicaid enrollees. It requires the Health Care Authority (Authority) to adjust Medicaid rates to reflect increases and decreases in service facilities and capacity. It also requires the Authority’s preparations for the reprourement of Medicaid managed care contracts to consider methodologies for measuring network access and adequacy, as well as contract amendments to reduce administrative burdens for health care providers. The Authority must direct managed care organizations to establish, continue, or expand delegation arrangements with behavioral health administrative services organizations (BHASOs) for crisis services.

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

 **PUBLIC SAFETY & HUMAN SERVICES**
Budget Highlights

\$27.2 million for public defense, maintaining recent funding levels (**\$10.6 million** or **\$5.3 million** per year), but also adding **\$16.6 million** in new funding (an additional **\$8.3 million** per year). Funding for public defense is a WSAC legislative priority.

\$15.398 million in one-time funds from the state 988 account is provided for startup costs, operational subsidies, and rates for non-Medicaid enrollees for three Crisis Relief Centers (23-hour facilities).

\$1 million is provided from the state 988 account to purchase electric vans for endorsed 988 mobile crisis teams.

\$962 thousand is provided for administrative costs to implement E2SSB 5745 (ITA council). Under the bill, additional funding is provided for the costs associated with providing defense services to patients in King County.

20 percent reduction for outreach and intensive case management funding for Recovery Navigator Program (RNP) services.

\$100 million is provided to implement ESHB 2015 (Public safety funding).

\$90 thousand is provided to implement 2SHB 1359 (Criminal insanity).

2025 Legislative Priorities

To prepare for the 2025 legislative session, the Legislative Steering Committee (LSC) spent considerable time developing and implementing a new system for crafting WSAC’s 2025-26 Legislative Agenda. The new method was designed to ensure a balanced legislative agenda that considers issues important to larger, more populated counties (urban) and smaller, less-populous counties (rural) equally. In November, the LSC adopted an extremely ambitious legislative agenda featuring 7 distinct priorities.

2025-26 Legislative Agenda: Seven Priorities



Fiscal Sustainability

The Challenge

Counties are the least financially-diversified governments in the state. Property tax, with its limited growth potential, is our main revenue source.

The Fix

Support the following strategies to improve county fiscal health: 1. Revise the 1% annual property tax growth limit to 3%; 2. Implement a local graduated REET; 3. Implement a county utility tax; and 4. Allocate a greater share of cannabis revenue to local governments.

OUTCOMES

HB 2049/SB 5812 proposed, among other things, to replace the 1% annual property tax growth limit with the rate of inflation plus the county population growth rate, not to exceed 3%.

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

HB 1704 and **SB 5547** both proposed new, albeit different, levels of increased funding appropriations of state cannabis sales tax revenue for local governments.

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

HB 2027 would have, among other things, implemented a new Real Estate Excise Tax policy for counties. The new policy would have implemented higher tax rates for property sales over \$1.5 million and lower tax rates for property sales under \$500,000.

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

HB 1702 proposed a new utility tax authority for counties up to 3%.

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



Public Defense Reform

The Challenge

The state must provide adequate funding to meet existing and future requirements for trial court public defense. Counties cannot continue to shoulder the vast majority of this burden alone.

The Fix

Provide state funding sufficient to ensure counties can meet the constitutional right to effective access to justice through effective legal representation.

OUTCOMES

HB 1592/SB 5404 would have made the state and county each responsible for 50% of the current costs for public defense services. The state would be responsible for all future cost increases. Counties could also choose to have the state take over public defense services.

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



County Transportation System Viability

The Challenge

Counties are responsible for nearly half of our state's roads and bridges, but the system in place for providing resources to maintain them is inadequate.

The Fix

Support the following strategies: 1. Revise the 1% the annual property tax growth rate limit to 3%; 2. Implement a Road Usage Charge (RUC) program to replace the gas tax with requirements that counties support; and 3. Provide new grant authority and funding for the County Road Administration Board (CRAB), Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board, and Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Program.

OUTCOMES

HB 2049/SB 5812 proposed, among other things, to replace the 1% annual property tax growth limit with the rate of inflation plus the county population growth rate, not to exceed 3%.

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

HB 1921/SB 5726 would have established a process for phasing in a RUC program. The bill created the RUC Highway Account and allocated revenue to local jurisdictions in accordance with gas tax distributions to be used for preservation and maintenance.

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

HB 1098/SB 5544 would have established a new grant program for local county access roads. The legislation was aligned with a top recommendation from the Grant Effectiveness Study done by CRAB last year.

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

(However, the program is established in the Transportation Budget)



Clean Energy Project Benefits

The Challenge

When the Energy Facility Siting Evaluation Council (EFSEC) issues a siting approval for a clean energy project and construction or operation begins, they prefer to work with local government service providers for help with inspections, reviews, and other technical tasks. However, local governments may face liability risks from violating their own development codes if the projects EFSEC oversees don't conform to local land use regulations.

The Fix

Provide local government liability protection when providing services during the construction and operational phases of EFSEC-approved projects.

OUTCOMES

SB 5317 amends state law to afford local governments liability protections from appeals and claims related to state law and local development code violations when cooperating with EFSEC to provide services after the Governor approves siting certification.

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



Improving Behavioral Health

The Challenge

We must address systemic gaps and barriers that prevent people from accessing the services they need and make Medicaid work for community behavioral healthcare. Current Medicaid managed care policy defining adequate networks of behavioral healthcare does not recognize the full range and scope of behavioral health capacity needs.

The Fix

Improve contractual standards through Medicaid reprocurement.

OUTCOMES

E2SHB 1813 concerned the reprocurement of medical assistance services, including the realignment of behavioral health crisis services for Medicaid enrollees. It requires the Health Care Authority (Authority) to adjust Medicaid rates to reflect increases and decreases in service facilities and capacity. It also requires the Authority's preparations for the reprocurement of Medicaid managed care contracts to consider methodologies for measuring network access and adequacy, as well as contract amendments for reduce administrative burdens for health care providers. The Authority must direct managed care organizations to establish, continue, or expand delegation arrangements with behavioral health administrative services organizations for crisis services.

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



County Housing Strategies

The Challenge

Many of the homes our state needs to improve housing access and affordability will not be built in cities. In our state, 34% of residents live in unincorporated areas. However, counties have limited tools to address the housing crisis.

The Fix

Support the following strategies: 1. Authorize detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) outside urban areas; 2. Authorize counties to increase density in appropriate areas for middle housing options; 3. Expand access to the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program; 4. Invest state funding in developing infrastructure that supports housing development; and 5. Provide funding for counties to offer pre-designed and approved housing plans.

OUTCOMES

HB 1345/SB 5470 would have authorized detached ADUs outside of urban growth areas (UGA) on all residential lots with certain requirements.

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

ESB 5471 authorizes counties to increase density for residential development in all UGAs and LAMIRDs to support middle housing development without the risk of appeals, with certain requirements.

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

HB 1206/SB 5679 would have expanded the MFTE program to all GMA-planning counties for new multi-family developments within UGAs.

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

Capital Budget Proviso would have appropriated \$250,000 for WSAC to work with South Puget Sound Community College to develop pre-approved housing plans for small-scale single-family homes, duplexes, and ADUs in 4 counties as a pilot program.

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



Support Rural County Coroners

The Challenge

In 2021, the legislature passed HB 1326, requiring counties with populations under 40,000 to have an independent coroner by 2025. This mandate impacts 13 rural counties where cost is a major obstacle.

The Fix

Provide state funding support to the impacted counties.

OUTCOMES

SB 5089 would have provided 6 years of funding support to the 13 rural counties to allow them time to adjust.

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



New County Revenue and Cost Savings

Despite WSAC's revenue proposals failing to pass, the legislature did include substantial local government funding benefits in its revenue bills and different portions of the State Operating and Transportation Budgets. WSAC has been working to update the annual 1% growth limit on local property tax revenue for many years. Our proposal this year, to change the limit to the rate of inflation plus the rate of population growth (HB 2049/SB 5812), received strong support in both the House and Senate for the first time. However, it ultimately failed after Governor Ferguson signaled his opposition.

ESHB 2015 authorizes a new .1% sales tax authority for local governments. With councilmanic approval until June 30, 2028, or with a majority approval of voters, counties can collect an additional .1% on all retail sales for criminal justice purposes. The bill also includes a grant program for local governments to hire, retain, and train law enforcement officers, peer counselors, and behavioral health personnel working in co-response to increase community policing and public safety. The legislature appropriated \$100 million for the grant program.

ESSB 5801 includes permanent new funding for counties from the gas tax increase (\$9.661 million for the 25-27 biennium), plus additional general fund revenue from filing fee increases (approximately \$3.507 million for the 25-27 biennium).

ESSB 5357 sets the base unfunded actuarial liability rates for the PERS 1 pension program to zero through fiscal year 2029. Removing this obligation saves local governments (including counties) a total of \$261.1 million in the 25-27 biennium.

ESSB 5814 removes the exemptions from retail sales taxes on select services and certain nicotine products. Counties will collect and retain the local portion of sales taxes.

Columbia River Caucus

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

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

2024-25 Key Accomplishments

- Caucus members continue to monitor the Columbia River Treaty negotiations between the U.S and Canada.
- Held quarterly meetings of the Columbia River Caucus to inform members of the issues affecting the Columbia River System and to engage directly with the Department of Ecology.
- Continued representing counties on the statewide Riparian Roundtable.
- Four Caucus members represent counties on the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (CRPAG). These members work with others on the CRPAG to advise the Office of Columbia River (OCR) on administering the Columbia River Program.
- Welcomed a new chair of the Caucus – Lincoln County Commissioner Jo Gilchrist.
- Received a presentation from the Bonneville Power Association on Columbia River Operations.
- Provided feedback on OCRs Columbia River Water Supply forecast.
- Received information on County Climate Resiliency Strategy planning efforts to comply with the Growth Management Act.
- Monitored the progress of the Upper Columbia adjudication.
- Received information on statewide energy needs, the role of clean energy in Washington, and recommendations regarding data centers.
- Provided input to Ecology on the emerging issue regarding municipal uses and permit exempt wells.
- Received a progress update on the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program.

Coastal Counties Caucus

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

2024-25 Key Accomplishments

- Supported WSAC members serving on Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) Boards, Councils, Committees.
- Represented and/or coordinated representation in PSP meetings and other state efforts that impact communities along the Puget Sound and Pacific Coast including feedback on the updates to the State Salmon Recovery Plan Addendum.
- Monitored, reported and distributed information on Puget Sound partnership efforts that involve county policy interest to WSAC policy staff and the county's coastal caucus.
- Monitored and communicated to coastal counties about shared work plan priorities for the Salmon Recovery Council and Ecosystem Coordination Board.
- Planned and coordinated the annual meeting to include an interactive session with the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office and the Puget Sound Partnership on aligning state and local priorities for salmon recovery. The agenda also included briefings on two legislative proposals that would address derelict vessels and certain impacts of ocean-going vessels.
- Acted as a point of contact for state agencies, tribes, and NGOs to distribute pertinent information and participation opportunities to coastal counties.

Timber and Public Lands Program

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

2024-25 Key Accomplishments

- Held quarterly meetings with Timber Counties Caucus members to receive reports from WSAC representative on the Board of Natural Resources, TFW Policy Committee, CMER Committee, Forest Practices Board, updates from DNR, and to provide information on developing topics in forest management.
- Continued the “Timber 101” training program with a series of presentations provided by Mark Meleason on forest riparian areas.
- Represented WSAC on each of the Adaptive Management Program functions, including the Forest Practices Board, TFW Policy Committee, and CMER.
- Provided staff support for the members representing counties on the Board of Natural Resources and the Forest Practices Board.
- Monitored and advocated for county interests on several legislative proposals during the legislative session.
- Supported a \$23 million proviso for the encumbered lands program (\$10 million), older forest conservation (\$10 million), and commercial thinning of trust lands (\$3 million).
- Welcomed a new chair of the Caucus – Mason County Commissioner Sharon Trask.
- Monitored the ongoing work with the Eastern Washington Sustainable Harvest calculations at DNR.
- Elected a new representative to the Board of Natural Resources – Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson.
- Welcomed a new gubernatorial appointment to the Forest Practices Board – Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour.
- Provided input to DNR on Commissioner of Public Lands Executive Orders regarding the set aside of an additional 77,000 acres of older forests for conservation.
- Participated and supported members in providing comment on the Forest Practices Board rulemaking for the new Np Buffer Rule for private forestlands.
- Updated the Timber Counties Caucus charter.
- Initiated research into state forestland reconveyance.



WSAC SOLUTIONS CENTER

wsac.org/solutions-center

As an added resource for counties, the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) launched its custom Solutions Center—a one-stop shop for county needs.

WSAC has developed an extensive network of partnerships through its Trusted Partner and Corporate Member Program to provide Washington counties with practical solutions to the issues they face, while affording cost-saving member benefits on needed services.

Counties can find services across industries, from cybersecurity and payment processing to design firms and retirement solutions, all in one convenient location. County members are even eligible for free Business Prime through WSAC's Amazon Business partnership!

25+

**Solutions and
counting for
counties!**

Scan to View Current Solutions ↓



The Solutions Center is growing fast, so be sure to check often for new solutions! If you have a recommendation for a potential partner or need a service our partners don't currently offer, let WSAC staff know, and we will work on finding a solution!

Solutions Center Directory



Our Solutions

NACo Edge



Live Healthy

The National Association of Counties (NACo) Live Healthy Prescription, Health & Dental Discount Program is a NO-COST program available to all member counties. It provides relief to uninsured and underinsured Americans who face growing health costs.

livehealthy@naco.org
wsac.org/solutions-center/directory/live-healthy



Nationwide

Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS) provides county employees with a Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program. Since its inception in 1980, NACo's Deferred Compensation Program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement income program available to county employees.

Kristopher Morton
Program Director
k.morton@nationwide.com
(614) 398-7184
nrsforu.com



Public Promise Insurance

Together, we are leveraging our collective strength to combat skyrocketing Rx costs for your employees. NACo Public Promise Insurance has partnered with CVS Caremark and Aetna – one of the largest PBMs in the nation – for both a stand-alone PBM contract and an integrated PBM contract.

Chris Blanchette
National Program Director
cblanchette@naco.org
(203) 910-6395
publicpromiseinsurance.org/pbm



Savi

Public Service Loan Forgiveness PSLF is a federal program designed to forgive the remaining balance on eligible federal student loans for borrowers who work full-time for qualifying public service employers after they make 120 payments. As of August 2024, 2.3% of PSLF applications have been accepted since November 2020.

Tony Raffa
Director Of Business Development Strategy
tony@bysavi.com
bysavi.com



three+one

Data. Not Opinions. A liquidity data tool for the public sector & higher Ed to execute borrowing, investing, and cash management decisions with more confidence and greater ease. Because three+one is neither a bank nor a Registered Investment Advisor, we provide a pure and independent perspective on making certain every dollar you have is being put to work efficiently, every day.

Samantha Rothschild
 Director of Partnerships
 slr@threeplusone.us
 (585) 484-0311 (ext. 712)
threeplusone.us

Trusted Partners



ACM

ACM specializes in not-at-fault fleet vehicle claims with a goal of delivering the most complete recovery possible under the law and with good practice, our damage recovery approach differs from traditional subrogation with much better results. We collect for often overlooked damages.

altclaim.com



Crowe

Crowe, WSAC's cybersecurity strategic partner, has been addressing cyber concerns for more than 30 years. Our team includes former chief information security officers and other highly specialized professionals who can offer perspective on how to supplement and strengthen your cybersecurity program. We can help you design and execute the strategies needed to mature your program and support organizational goals.

Michael Salihoglu
 Pentester & Cybersecurity
 Senior Manager
 michael.salihoglu@crowe.com
wsac.org/solutions-center/directory/crowe



Pet Parent

PETPARENT, is an animal welfare solution provider brought to you by Gov Companion. Our program builds an inclusive and high capture rate pet registry and animal services programming to work towards no kill shelters, help animal services, and return lost pets to their owners.

*petparentusa.com/
 program*



Previ

Previ offers an exclusive employee membership with superior prices on premium mobile phone services. For cell service, Previ negotiates directly with T-Mobile and AT&T to offer unlimited everything mobile plans for Previ members and their families. The average savings for employees moving to a Previ membership plan is \$1,200+ annually.

Dallin Demke
VP of Growth
hello@previ.com
(801) 437-0620
wsac.org/solutions-center/directory/previ



Proofpoint

Proofpoint, Inc. is a leading cybersecurity and compliance company that protects organizations' greatest assets and biggest risks: their people. With an integrated suite of cloud-based solutions, Proofpoint helps companies around the world stop targeted threats, safeguard their data, and make their users more resilient against cyber attacks.

proofpoint.com



Public Surplus

Public Surplus has been helping government agencies sell their surplus for over 20 years. Public Surplus is excited to announce a new partnership with WSAC. Call us today to learn how your county can benefit.

Jaren Waters
Account Executive
jarenwaters@
thepublicgroup.com
(801) 932-7000 (ext.
428)
wsac.org/solutions-center/directory/publicsurplus



SentinelOne

SentinelOne started with an idea: to protect the things that matter most to our customers by pushing the boundaries of cybersecurity. Over the decades, we've hustled and innovated, we've grown and transformed, to create the world's most advanced cybersecurity platform.

wsac@sentinelone.com
sentinelone.com

Platinum Members



Amazon Business

Washington State Association of Counties is providing its members with free Business Prime! Already paying for Prime? As a WSAC member, you can receive a prorated refund! WSAC Member Benefits include: Free Business Prime, Pre-Approved line of credit of \$5k+ with pay by invoice, and Discounts on thousands of essential products.

wsac.org/solutions-center/directory/amazonbusiness



CORE

CORE is a payments and revenue management software provider with 40 years of experience in the government sector. Partnering with over 1100 government entities, CORE enhances modern payment and engagement experiences. We connect customers with trusted agencies, streamlining every interaction from first contact to final reconciliation.

Stephanie Toston
Account Executive
 stoston@corebt.com
 (602) 316-8586
www.corebt.com



DLR Group

We're an integrated design firm. Our promise is to elevate the human experience through design. This inspires a culture of design and fuels the work we do around the world. We are 100 percent employee-owned: every employee is literally invested in our clients' success. At the core of our firm are interdisciplinary employee-owner teams, engaged with all project life-cycle stakeholders.

Justin Stranzl
Principal
 jstranzl@dlrgroup.com
 (206) 461-6000
dlrgroup.com



WCIF

WCIF was established in 1958 by the Washington State Association of Counties to provide more cost-efficient health insurance for county employees.

Today, WCIF provides a comprehensive suite of health and welfare benefit options, as well as full-service benefits support to local public servants across the State of Washington.

John (Chip) Taylor
Executive Director
 chip@wcif.net
 (360) 292-4475
wcif.net

Gold Members



BerryDunn

Michelle Kennedy

Local Government Consultant

mkennedy@berrydunn.com

(207) 842-8088

berrydunn.com/local



McKinstry

Pat Owen

Business Development Manager

patricko@mcKinstry.com

(206) 413-6369

mcKinstry.com



NextEra Energy Resources

Ivy Lyn

Community Engagement Manager, PNW

ivy.lyn@nexteraenergy.com

nexteraenergyresources.com



SSC

Ted Carlson

General Manager

ted@ssc-inc.com

(360) 820-0355

ssc-inc.com

Silver Members



Puget Sound Energy (PSE)

Carryn Vande Griend

PSE Local Government Affairs

carryn.vandegriend@pse.com

(509) 218-9012

pse.com



Vivid Co.

Kindra Benavidez

Partner

kindra@vividco.com

(360) 561-5239

vividco.com



Waste Connections

Rick Vahl

Government Affairs Manager

rick.vahl@wasteconnections.com

(253) 240-0655

wasteconnections.com

Associate Members



Washington State Office of Equity

TraeAnna Holiday

Communications Director

traeanna.holiday@equity.wa.gov

(360) 584-2760

equity.wa.gov

2024-25 Financial Health

2024-25 Key Accomplishments

1

WSAC ended 2025 with a total cash position of \$3,716,376. This is considerably higher than the 2024 ending cash position, mainly due to funds received from the Department of Commerce Energy Grant.

2

As of the end of 2025, Department of Commerce had been invoiced and paid WSAC \$3,112,342. This money is to be fully paid out to the counties for the energy audits they applied for in 2025.

3

\$1,200,000 is invested in eConnectDirect CDs. These investments yielded \$89,270 in 2025.

2024 Financial Dashboard

Total Assets:
\$3,652,823

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

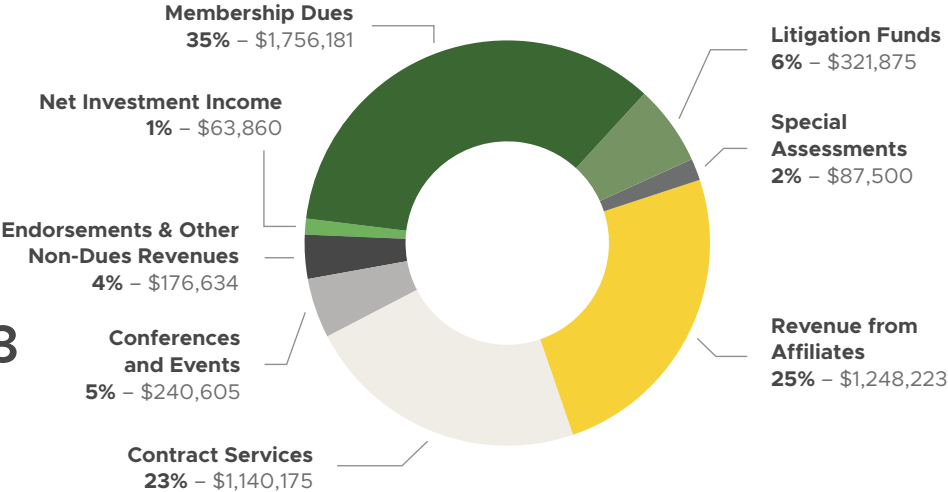
Net Assets:
\$1,987,822

Change from 2023:
\$86,658

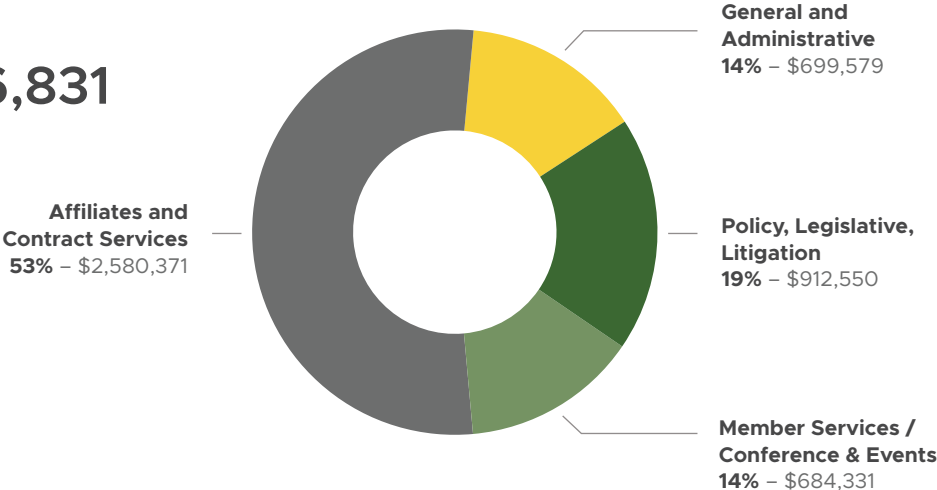
Liabilities:
\$1,660,001

Payables: \$703,823
Deferred Rev:
\$956,178

**2024
Revenues
Total:
\$5,035,053**



**2024 Expenses
Total: \$4,876,831**



Staff Directory

Administration & Finance



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



Lynn Fiorillo-Lowe
Operations and Support Assistant
(360) 489-3019
lfiorillo-low@wsac.org



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



Tanya Naylor
Bookkeeper / Office Coordinator
(564) 669-0518
tnaylor@wsac.org

Communications & Member Services



Tyler Melhart
Graphic/Web Design Manager
(360) 489-3016
tmelhart@wsac.org



Mitch Netzer
Sr. Manager, Business Development & Communications
(360) 485-8549
mnetzer@wsac.org



Jessica Strozewski
Senior Manager, Member Experience
(360) 999-8714
jstrozewski@wsac.org



Jessica Roth
Business Development & Communications Manager
(360) 918-1083
jroth@wsac.org



Buqua Pitts
Hospitality Assistant

Program Services



Brynn Brady
Program Consultant, Coastal Caucus
Ceiba Consulting
(253) 686-3387
brynn@ceibaconsulting.com



Court Stanley
Program Consultant, Timber Program
Heartwood Consulting LLC
(360) 701-4644
cstanley@heartwood-consulting.com

Policy and Legislative Relations



Axel Swanson
*Managing Director,
Washington State
Association of County
Engineers (WSACE)*
(360) 489-3014
aswanson@wsac.org



Paul Jewell
*Government
Relations Director*
(360) 489-3024
pjewell@wsac.org



Travis Dutton
Policy Coordinator
(360) 999-3415
tdutton@wsac.org



Curtis Steinhauer
Policy Coordinator
(360) 580-2301
csteinhauer@wsac.org



Brad Banks
Policy Consultant
(360) 918-6508



Brian Enslow
Policy Consultant
(360) 489-8121



Kelsey Hulse
Policy Consultant
(425) 306-3614

Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials



Jaime Bodden
*Managing Director,
WSALPHO*



Chris Goodwin
FPHS Policy Advisor



Brianna Steere
*FPHS Policy
Advisor*



Nia Watkins
*WSALPHO Member
Services & Event
Coordinator*



Sep Fuller
*WSALPHO Content
Development Specialist*



Tracey Thomas
*WSALPHO Workforce
Development Manager*

WSAC Executive Committee

2024-2025 Executive Committee



PRESIDENT
Rob Coffman
Lincoln County



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Mark Ozias
Clallam County



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Gunner Fulmer
Walla Walla County



IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Lisa Janicki
Skagit County

Board Members

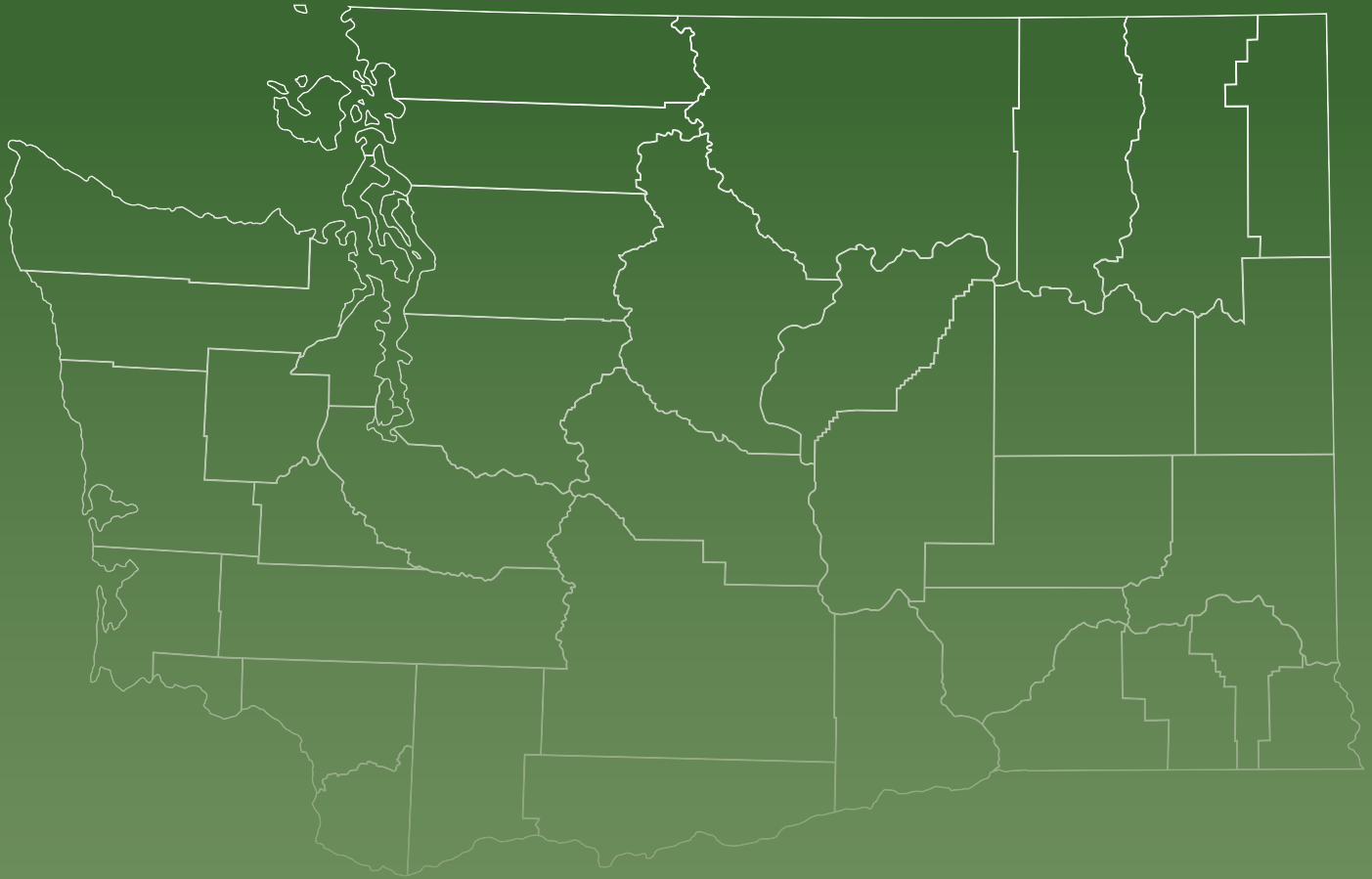
- Will McKay** Benton County
- Matt Little** Clark County
- Dan Sutton** Douglas County
- Katie Walters** Kitsap County
- Sean Swope** Lewis County
- Sharon Trask** Mason County
- Jani Hitchen** Pierce County
- Ryan Mello** Pierce County
- Jaime Smith** Pierce County
- Jane Fuller** San Juan County
- Megan Dunn** Snohomish County
- Dave Somers** Snohomish County

- Annika Vaughn** Snohomish County
- Lacey Harper** Snohomish County
- Mary Kunej** Spokane County
- Mark Burrows** Stevens County
- Carolina Mejia** Thurston County
- Tye Menser** Thurston County
- Satpal Sidhu** Whatcom County
- Art Swannack** Whitman County
- LaDon Linde** Yakima County
- Amanda McKinney** Yakima County

Alternates

- Chris Seubert** Asotin County
- Michael Alvarez** Benton County
- Glen Yung** Clark County
- Vickie Raines** Grays Harbor County
- Janet St. Clair** Island County
- Christine Rolfes** Kitsap County
- Scott Hutsell** Lincoln County
- Robyn Denson** Pierce County
- Jared Mead** Snohomish County
- Al French** Spokane County
- Kaylee Galloway** Whatcom County





**WASHINGTON STATE
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**

206 Tenth Ave SE
Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 753-1886
wsac.org