

2025 AWC legislative agenda

The following items are the official 2025 City Legislative Priorities as adopted by the AWC Board.

2025 City Legislative Priorities

Fiscal Sustainability

- Revise the property tax cap to tie it to inflation, up to 3%, so that local elected officials can adjust the local property tax rate to better serve their communities.

Public Safety

- Support efforts to prevent and address juvenile crime, including expansion of juvenile behavioral health treatment capacity and state correctional capacity.
- Enhance officer training through continued state funding of 100% of Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) costs; and expansion of existing regional academies and establishing new regional academies; and replacement the outdated Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) main facility.
- Increase funding to meet local public safety needs including additional direct state funding opportunities and enhancing the existing local public safety sales tax and allowing for councilmanic implementation.
- Support creation of programs designed to improve law enforcement retention, such as state supported law enforcement officer wellness and injury prevention programs.
- Support efforts to reduce gun violence including additional local options for regulation of firearms in certain public spaces. Support strengthening prosecutors' ability to enforce unlawful possession of firearms.

Infrastructure investment

- Advocate for direct and meaningful investments in traditional local infrastructure (such as drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems) for operations and maintenance of aging systems, including expanded and reliable funding for the Public Works Assistance Account.
- Support sustainable state transportation revenue that provides funding for local preservation, maintenance, and operations including direct distributions to cities and town in addition to grant opportunities.
- Develop new fiscal tools to build infrastructure to support housing development and growth including increased funding for the Connecting Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP).
- Expand cities' ability and flexibility to use REET for additional capital needs including maintenance as well as to support affordable housing. Pursue other flexibility options including additional REET authority, harmonizing REET 1 & 2, and the ability to set a progressive rate model similar to the one the state has adopted.

Increasing housing supply

- Support Real Estate Transfer Tax dedicated to funding affordable housing.
- Explore new funding options for needs along the housing continuum, including home ownership and senior housing

- Explore dedication of existing revenues to housing purposes including insuring that funding is available for small and medium-sized cities and towns in both eastern and western Washington.

Increase behavioral health treatment capacity statewide

- Expand funding for grants to establish and support ongoing funding for local behavioral health crisis co-responder programs. Support additional training and certification and workforce development for co-responders.

- Seek increased investments in community behavioral health treatment funding – both capital start-up and operational expenses; support expansion of continuum of treatment capacity, from crisis stabilization to inpatient to outpatient; support continued expansion of forensic behavioral health treatment capacity; support additional mental health support for students
- Support efforts to increase behavioral health workforce, including additional training opportunities for co-responders.

Issues that are significant to cities

Indigent defense

- The State Supreme Court is considering new reduced case load standards for indigent defense. Cities support a separate and more detailed analysis of the current state of indigent defense for misdemeanor cases to determine what changes in the standard are warranted. Cities also seek enhanced state funding for indigent defense, and workforce development for prosecutors and public defenders.

Organized retail theft

- Support additional prosecutorial and law enforcement resources to address retail theft.

Incentivize condominium construction

- Work with coalition to support further progress in the development of condominiums. Seek a study of liability issues to develop recommendations to address barriers to construction of new condominiums.

Public records

- Continue to pursue updates to the Public Records Act (PRA) to reduce the impacts of vexation litigation and vexatious requestors.

Preserve manufactured home parks

- Advocate for more funding to support tenant acquisition of manufacture home parks including extending the existing 70-day purchase window.
- Expand CHIP program to cover septic conversions in parks.

Fish passage

- Support inclusion of local fish barrier correction investments in any state transportation investments.
- Support full funding of Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Board list.

Homelessness response

- Support encampment resolution work in cities and private lands. Advocate for increased state funding for encampment removal on local right of ways.
- Support increased state investment in emergency and transitional housing.

Product stewardship for packaging (WRAP Act)

- Support proposals to establish a product stewardship framework for packaging to reduce the impact on local solid waste programs.

Reduce city liability exposure

- Protect against liability expansion and new policies that would drive additional claims

and litigation increasing costs especially in the area of law enforcement and public safety, and human resources.

- Explore tort reforms that would reduce liability and related costs for cities particularly in the area of traffic related claims.

Nutrient General Permit

- Continue effort to gain state support for investments to update Marine Dissolved Oxygen Criteria last set in 1967.

Increase availability of affordable and accessible childcare

- Support efforts to increase affordable childcare access statewide, including reducing barriers for providers; construction of new facilities, increasing workforce development, increasing access for state subsidized childcare slots, and efforts to increase childcare availability in rural areas.

Issues that cities support

Tax code structural changes

- Support efforts to review and revise both state and local tax structures such that they rely less on regressive revenue options. Changes to the state tax structure should not negatively impact cities' revenue authority and should allow cities revenue flexibility to address their community's needs.

Therapeutic Courts, Community Courts, Diversion Programs

- Support continued and expanded operational grant funding, as well as dedicated ongoing operational funding for municipal therapeutic courts, community courts, and diversion programs.

B&O Tax on royalties

- Support clarification of how to apply B&O taxes to business revenue related to royalties.

Asylum seeker and migrant assistance

- Advocate for support for additional assistance for arriving migrants and asylum seekers including centralize state efforts to provide case management resources. Support efforts to reduce impacts on cities that are experiencing high-numbers of unsupported asylee and migrant arrivals.

Balancing employee leave and benefits requirements

- Seek opportunities to balance costs and reduce unintended impacts on employers from expansion of leave laws and other proposed employee benefit enhancements.

Public meetings

- Explore Open Public Meeting Act (OPMA) updates to help address the trend of increasing disruptive activities and hate speech during public meetings.

Emergency management and response

- Expand support to cities for prevention, planning, response, and recovery for wildfire and other natural disasters.
- Provide 100% reimbursement to cities that provide firefighting support for state wildland fire deployments. Currently, the state only provides 70-75% reimbursement which disincentivizes city fire service participation.

First responder mental wellness

- Support efforts to increase programs to improve first responder mental well-being and evaluate current approach to workers compensation claims to focus on prevention and return to work options and reduction of PTSD claims. Evaluate the process for responding to PTSD claims to improve outcomes.

Elections

- Support policies that preserve community decision-making and input regarding how local elections are administered.

Increase digital equity and accessibility statewide

- Advocate for statewide funding that supports affordable connectivity.
- Support policies that increase digital literacy and adoption.

Electrical grid stability

- Support policies that enhance stability and productivity of the electrical grid as electrification of transportation and other arenas increases demand.

Increase tools for annexation

- Create new financial incentives to encourage municipal annexations

Ensure better coordination of development standards in unincorporated UGAs and cities to facilitate future annexations

- Require county to apply city development standards in unincorporated UGA to facilitate future annexations.

Amend the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA)

- Explore efforts to reform the Involuntary Treatment Act to allow for expanded use of ITA holds for individuals who consistently refuse necessary treatment.

Firefighter safety and electrification response

- The increase in electrification including electric vehicles (EV) and electric storage systems (ESS) as created new challenges for the fire service. Support efforts to provided new and increased training on best practices for responding to EV and ESS fires.

State Crime Lab

- Increase resources for the state crime lab to ensure timely processing of evidence.

