

2024 City Legislative Priorities

Strong cities make a great state. Cities are home to 65% of Washington's residents, drive the state's economy, and provide the most accessible form of government. Cities' success depends on adequate resources and local decision-making authority to best meet the needs of our residents.

Washington's 281 cities ask the Legislature to partner with us and act on the following priorities:



Help recruit and retain police officers for public safety

Provide additional funding tools and resources for officer recruitment and retention to improve public safety. This includes updating the existing local option Public Safety Sales Tax to allow implementation by councilmanic authority and greater flexibility for using the funds to cover increased officer wages and related programs like behavioral health co-response teams.

Expand access to state-mandated training. In particular, continue increasing the number of classes for the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) and expanding the new regional academies. Getting new officers on the street faster supports recruitment and retention, thus improving public safety outcomes in our communities.



Revise the arbitrary property tax cap

Revise the arbitrary 1% property tax cap that has been in place for more than 20 years. Tie the tax to inflation and population growth factors with a new cap not to exceed 3%. This allows local elected officials to adjust the local property tax rate to better serve our communities and keep up with the costs of providing basic services like police, fire, streets, and valued community amenities like parks. The current 1% cap has created a structural deficit in cities' revenue and expenditure model, causing reliance on regressive revenues and artificially restricting the ability of property taxes to fund critical community needs.



Continue investing in infrastructure

Continue strong state investments in infrastructure funding to support operations and maintenance of traditional and non-traditional infrastructure like drinking water, wastewater, and broadband. Expand funding options that support state and local transportation needs with emphasis on preservation and maintenance to prevent expensive replacement and repairs. Improve access to Climate Commitment Act funding, including direct distributions, for city priorities that support carbon reduction and climate resiliency.



Provide behavioral health resources

Create greater access to behavioral health services to include substance use disorder treatment and dual diagnosis treatment facilities. Support continued state funding for cities to help communities establish alternative response programs like co-responder programs, diversion programs, and others that provide options beyond law enforcement to assist individuals experiencing behavioral health challenges.

AWC's advocacy is guided by these core principles from our Statement of Policy:

- Local decision-making authority
- Fiscal flexibility and sustainability
- Equal standing for cities
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Strong Washington state partnerships
- Nonpartisan analysis and decision-making

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