

AWC
Association of
Washington Cities

WACO
Washington
Association of
County Officials

WSAC
Washington State
Association
of Counties

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
THIRD
JOINT
LEGISLATIVE
PROPOSAL

2005 Legislative Session

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❖ STATE AND LOCAL ISSUES

The work of cities and counties is tied closely to that of the state. Often we are partners in delivering key services or programs to citizens; in other cases, often with social services, we fill gaps not covered by other public or charitable programs. Collaborative work with the legislative, executive and judicial branches is essential to fulfilling our mutual responsibility to the community.

Transportation

Washington's citizens expect a safe, reliable, convenient, and accessible transportation system. Cities and counties current transportation funding is not keeping up with those demands. Additional funding is needed in order to preserve and maintain the existing system; make critical safety improvements; improve freight mobility; and provide congestion relief.

The 2005 Legislature should:

- **Provide cities and counties additional funding for transportation through both enhanced state shared revenues and expanded local option funding.**

Mental Health

State and county government partner to provide many social services, including the public mental health system. Within that system, cities and counties provide different parts of crisis response ranging from appropriate treatment and diversion to costly law enforcement and criminal justice interventions.

The 2005 Legislature should:

- **Fund services for about 35,000 non-medicaid eligible people and non-medicaid services such as crisis response previously covered by Medicaid cost savings annually.**
- **Work with cities and counties to address the crisis in the lack of inpatient and residential beds that diverts persons with mental illness into the criminal justice and other costly emergency systems.**

❖ CRITICAL FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

It is essential to the future of this state that the Legislature ensure the fiscal stability of Washington cities and counties and provide the resources to have the capacity to deliver services to their communities.

The 2005 Legislature should:

- **Provide permanent funding for the most financially distressed cities and counties.**
- **Eliminate or reduce restrictions on the use of revenues including removing non-supplanting directives in local tax ballot measures.**
- **Review property tax exemptions once every six years.**
- **Provide a permanent funding source for public health services.**

❖ LAW AND JUSTICE

Civil Liability Reform

City and county government spends millions of dollars each year on liability insurance and on defending lawsuits. In many of these cases, while city and county responsibility is small, our liability can be significant if others at fault lack financial resources.

The 2005 Legislature should:

- **Limit joint and several liability to significantly reduce governmental expenditures when government is not primarily at fault.**
- **Codify a strong public duty doctrine that eliminates governmental liability for activity that benefits the public as a whole.**

Indigent Defense

The U.S. constitution entitles each person accused of a crime to an attorney. Washington is one of 11 states in which the full cost of this constitutional right in the trial courts is borne by cities and counties.

The 2005 Legislature should:

- **Move toward full state funding of trial-level criminal indigent defense and related costs.**

TRI-ASSOCIATION PRINCIPLES

The Association of Washington Cities, the Washington State Association of Counties, and the Washington Association of County Officials acknowledge that the Washington State Legislature, during the 2003 and 2004 sessions of the Legislature, did endeavor to address the fiscal plight of Washington's local governments by enacting legislation in response to the problems facing cities and counties.

THE TRI-ASSOCIATION ADOPTED PRINCIPLES IN THE FALL OF 2002 AND NOW REAFFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO:

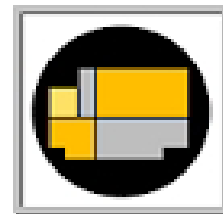
- Assist uniquely impacted jurisdictions to secure sufficient resources and assure that all cities and counties are able to provide basic services.
- Recognize the need to enhance revenues of cities and counties with a focus on securing permanent resources for criminal justice and public health.
- Ensure that cities and counties are provided flexibility in the use of revenues.
- Support legislation that reduces or eliminates state-imposed mandates and program responsibilities or secures state reimbursement for those activities.
- Seek legislation that removes the restrictions that limit the efficient delivery of local government services.
- Assist city and county officials to inform their citizens of the impact of insufficient revenues on the provision of basic services.



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