



AWC celebrates 90 years of strong city advocacy

AWC was founded in 1933, when a diverse group of cities gathered in Yakima to talk about the need for a unified city voice before the state Legislature. This year marks the 90th anniversary of that decision. As we look back over the years, it's clear that cities and AWC have maintained a strong presence in the legislative process.

For nearly a century, our collective city voice has been a crucial part of legislative deliberations and AWC has seen many great successes in advocating for cities' needs. 2023 was no different. We continued that strong tradition of cities engaging in the legislative process—with important progress to show for it.

Recapping the 2023 session

Now that we've had some time to reflect on the 2023 legislative session, it's a good time to celebrate our success and think about what we need to continue working on in 2024.

We were pleased to see significant action on our five priorities and in the state's budgets, including the long-sought return of full funding to the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA). After years of working towards the goal of restoring PWAA funding, that alone is worth celebrating with a ticker-tape parade! We also made significant progress on public safety issues and in affordable housing, while maintaining strong state investment in city needs. Read inside to learn more.

These successes wouldn't have occurred without the strong engagement of all of you, our members. Your communications with legislators and engagement with the legislative process were instrumental in making the city voice heard and impacting legislative decision-making throughout the session. Thank you all for your efforts, engagement, and continued support of the AWC Government Relations Team.

Looking ahead to 2024

The legislative cycle doesn't take a break—as soon as we wrap up one session, we begin to set the stage for the next year. The interim (the time between sessions) is really the most important period for engaging with your legislators, building relationships, and identifying the issues that need action in the next session. At AWC, we began the process of building our 2024 legislative agenda back in May with the opportunity for our members to share ideas for next year. AWC's Legislative Priorities Committee has been meeting to review and vet the various issues and will finalize recommendations in September.

We know how busy you are, but investing a little time over the next several months will go a long way towards a successful 2024 legislative session.

Thank you for all you do!
AWC Government Relations Team



Save the date!

City Action Days takes place in
Olympia on January 24-25, 2024.

2023

Legislative Session: City legislative priorities & outcomes

The 2023 Legislature addressed AWC's legislative priorities. Read the pros and cons for cities.



Respond to the *Blake* decision

Support clarification around the crime of possessing a controlled substance so individuals, law enforcement, and treatment providers can respond appropriately.

Pro: Passed legislation to create a statewide criminal penalty for drug possession (**SB 5536**).

Pro: Provided funding for new therapeutic courts, law enforcement assisted diversion programs, and substance use disorder and behavioral health treatment.

Pro: Appropriated **\$11.5 million** in continued funding to reimburse cities for vacating simple drug possession convictions, including cannabis or cannabis paraphernalia, to comply with *State v. Blake*.



Address vehicle pursuits for public safety

Clarify law enforcement's ability to conduct vehicle pursuits with reasonable suspicion standard in specific circumstances.

Pro: Passed legislation allowing for a reasonable suspicion standard for pursuits of certain dangerous crimes (**SB 5352**).

Pro: Funded a **\$3 million** grant program for new vehicle tracking technologies.

Pro: Funded additional CJTC BLEA classes in Burien, Spokane, and at three new regional training academies.

Pro: Appropriated **\$5 million** for law enforcement wellness programs.



Increase housing availability & affordability

Support a proactive approach with new tools, incentives, and revenues to increase housing supply and address affordability. Recognize the need for a multifaceted approach bolstering city capacity to accommodate new housing construction with more certainty and speed. Acknowledge the need for significantly more resources to meet the identified need for lower income housing.

Pro: Adopted bills exempting residential development from SEPA (**SB 5412**), eliminating external design review boards (**HB 1293**), providing state assistance for permit streamlining (**SB 5290**), and changes to the building codes (**SB 5491**). Passed a negotiated permit processing reform bill (**SB 5290**).

Pro: Funded infrastructure to support housing, including the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA) and the Connecting Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP).

Pro: Adopted agreed-to zoning changes to support middle housing development while preserving decision-making flexibility for cities (**HB 1110**).

Incomplete: Invested nearly **\$1 billion** in funding for low-income housing and related services, but did not dedicate ongoing state revenues, nor establish local authority for new revenue. Dedicated and sustainable revenue is still needed.



Ensure basic infrastructure funding

Fully fund Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA), allow current revenue diversions to sunset, refrain from further fund transfers or diversions. Expand state funding opportunities for local maintenance and operations.

Pro: Funded the PWAA at **\$400 million** for the 2023-25 biennium. Expiring revenue diversions will sunset, restoring full funding to the account.

Pro: Maintained commitments made in the Move Ahead WA package for city preservation and maintenance. Appropriated **\$9 million** for the Transportation Improvement Board and **\$14.6 million** for the Complete Streets Program.



Provide behavioral health resources

Create greater access to community-based behavioral health services to include substance use disorder treatment and dual diagnosis treatment facilities.

Pro: Improved the 988-behavioral and mental health crisis line (**HB 1134**), and established certification criteria for 23-hour crisis relief centers (**SB 5120**).

Pro: Appropriated **\$1.17 billion** for behavioral health treatment expenses statewide, including provider rate increases, funding for 988-crisis response, and substance use disorder treatment and prevention. Appropriated **\$884 million** for behavioral health facilities. Of this funding, **\$224 million** is for community-based behavioral health facilities, and **\$613 million** is allocated for a new 350-bed forensic hospital wing at Western State Hospital.

Pro: Provided **\$4 million** in grant funding for local alternative response programs.



Other significant issues:

Cities identified several significant policies for the 2023 session.

Pro: Standardized and increased procurement limits (**HB 1621**). The Capital Projects Advisory Review Board must review and make recommendations on the proposed increases.

Pro: Clarified that cities may use impact fees to fund improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities not within road rights-of-way (**SB 5452**).

Pro: Modified small works roster requirements, addressed issues of equity in public works procurement, and revised the small and limited works roster process to increase administrative efficiency (**SB 5268**).

Con: Did not address legislation to reduce the impact of unnecessary and costly public records litigation (**HB 1597/SB 5571**).

Pro: Passed legislation to phase out the PERS 1 unfunded accrued actuarial liability (UAAL) surcharge resulting in significant savings for cities over time (**SB 5294**).

Pro: Passed balanced legislation and associated funding to help cities integrate climate change considerations into the Growth Management Act (**HB 1181**).

Pro: Reinstated the annexation sales tax credit to support cities annexing large areas with fiscal support to provide urban levels of service (**HB 1425**).

Pro: Funded the Fish Barrier Removal Board at the highest level in the state's history. This critical funding source helps cities correct fish-blocking culverts to support salmon recovery.

Con: Did not revise the arbitrary 1% property tax cap to instead tie it to inflation and population growth up to 3% (**HB 1670/SB 5770**).

Advocacy is a year-round job

The 2023 legislative session concluded in April. See inside to learn about the Legislature's actions on our five legislative priorities, both pros and cons.

As we often say: Advocacy is a year-round job. Now is a good time to invite your legislators to a council meeting to talk about the legislative session and prepare for 2024.

Our mission:
Serving our members through advocacy, education, and services



advocacy tips for the legislative interim

Hone your advocacy skills and engage with your legislators – 6 ideas to inspire you:

- 1. Meet with your local legislators:** It doesn't have to be formal, even a quick check-in over coffee is a good idea. Regular meetings are a good way to build your relationship and keep in touch.
- 2. Be a tourist in your own town:** Take your legislator on a tour. Visit important projects and help your legislator be more familiar with your community.
- 3. Budget season is a good time to share:** During budgeting season, be sure to invite your legislators to attend your budget workshops and learn how your city's finances are faring.
- 4. Build your own legislative agenda:** Every year AWC adopts a legislative agenda. We encourage cities to adopt your own specific agenda highlighting policy positions and budget requests.
- 5. Share your legislative agenda with your legislators:** It can take time to draft a bill, and there are deadlines for funding requests, so talk to your legislator early and often.
- 6. Partner with your partners:** Reach out to local partners, community groups, and neighboring jurisdictions to build coalitions and work together on important community legislative goals.