

2025 Legislative Session Recap

May 22, 2025

Government Relations Staff



1

Government Relations Team

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Issue areas – Economic development; federal issues; finance; human resources, labor relations & pensions; liability; open government

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Issue areas – Public works & infrastructure; telecommunications; transportation; utilities & energy

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Special Projects Coordinator

Issue area – Economic development; federal issues; human services & behavioral health; parks

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Government Relations Assistant



2

2025 Legislative Session

105-day Session: January - April

New legislators, new committees, new chairs, 43 legislators with city/county background

Democrats expand majorities: 30-19 Senate, 59-39 House

Economic environment: Budget shortfall, negative revenue forecasts, high interest rates, inflationary pressure; federal funding uncertainty

Biennial budgets: Operating, Capital, Transportation

Policy focus: Revenue, housing, education

3



Fiscal sustainability

Revise the arbitrary 1% property tax cap that has been in place for more than 20 years. Adopt a new cap tied to inflation and population growth factors, with a limit not to exceed 3%.



Public safety

Provide more resources and tools to cities and towns to address public safety and criminal justice challenges.



Infrastructure investment

Protect and expand direct and meaningful investments in traditional local infrastructure for needed expansion and ongoing operations and maintenance of aging systems, included expanded and reliable funding for the Public Works Assistance Account.



4



Housing supply

Dedicate current funding and explore new funding options, such as real estate transfer tax, to address needs across the housing continuum, including home ownership, senior, workforce, affordable, and permanent supportive housing.



Behavioral health treatment capacity

Expand funding for grants to establish and support ongoing funding for local behavioral health crisis co-responder programs.



5

AWC's 2025 significant issues

- Indigent defense funding and staffing
- Reducing organized retail theft
- Incentives for condominium construction
- Public Records Act addressing vexatious litigation
- Preserving manufactured home parks
- Fish passage, culvert repairs & replacement
- Homelessness response
- Product stewardship for packaging (WRAP Act)
- Reducing city liability exposure
- Nutrient general permits
- Increasing availability of affordable & accessible childcare



6

2025-27 biennial budget outcomes



Operating

- \$288 million sweep from the Public Works Assistance Account
- \$100 million for law enforcement grants in HB 2015
- \$62 million to address housing and services for those who are unhoused
- \$1.2 billion for homelessness and affordable housing.
- \$45 million for GMA planning grants
- \$6.8 million for MRSC
- \$4 million in grants to fund city alternative response teams
- \$3.6 million for city public defense grants



Transportation

- Estimated \$36.2 million additional distribution (over six years) from \$0.06/gal increase in gas tax
- \$310 million for the Transportation Improvement Board, including funding for Small City Pavement and Sidewalks, Complete Streets, and preservation funding
- \$83.3 million for Safe Routes to School
- \$81.7 million for pedestrian and bike safety
- \$9.2 million to address homeless encampments in state rights of way



Capital

- \$365 million for Public Works Board, including \$100 million in additional construction bond authority to make up for PWAA sweep – \$100 million available for applications for FY26
- \$605 million for Housing Trust Fund + \$157 million for other housing programs
- \$32.5 million for Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board for local culverts
- \$81 million for CERB capital construction projects
- \$125 million for grants funding local clean energy and climate resilience/mitigation projects



7

Housing bills

Passed

HB 1183 – Development regulations to promote Passivhaus, façade modulation and parking restrictions.

HB 1353 – Authorize cities to voluntarily adopt an ADU self-certification program

HB 1494 – Minor Multifamily Property Tax Exemption reform

HB 1757 – Follow-on bill regulating conversion of existing buildings to residential

HB 1791 – Harmonizing uses of local REET funds and additional flexibility for housing

HB 5148 – State compliance audit of Housing Element and development regulations

SB 5184 – Significant preemption on on-site parking requirements for cities over 30,000

SB 5559 – Providing standards for unit lot subdivisions



8

Housing bills

Passed

HB 1096 – Requiring cities to provide process for lot splitting

HB 1491 – New requirements for zoning around transit

SB 5571 – Restrictions on city regulation of exterior cladding of buildings

Did not pass

HB 1195 – State compliance review of emergency shelter and housing ordinances

HB 1443 / SB 5332 – Requiring cities to allow RVs as permanent housing

SB 5613 – Challenging new standard for “Clear & objective” development regulations



9

Homelessness bills

Passed

HB 1260 – Document recording fee administrative cleanup

HB 1858 – Applying document recording fee to bank-to-bank transfers

Did not pass

HB 1240 – Who pays vehicle residence impounds? (cities)

HB 1380 – State regulation local ordinances related to public camping

HB 1653/SB 5484 – Who pays for vehicle residence impounds? (state)



10

Transportation bills

Passed

SB 5161 – Transportation appropriations bill

SB 5801 – Transportation resources bill (includes 6-cent gas tax increase)

SB 5595 – “Shared streets” designation

HB 1733 – Relocation expenses due to agency displacement

HB 1774 – Lease of unused highway land

Did not pass

HB 1921 – Road usage charge (similar concept in House budget proposal)

SB 5374 – Tribal representation in local transportation planning



11

Open Government bills

Passed

HB 1934 – Clarifies PRA exemption for discrimination/harassment investigations redactions to protect employee identities

Did not pass

HB 1765/SB 5707 – Creates a local government email newsletter list PRA exemption

HB 1964 – Requires PRA requester to declare request is for noncommercial purpose



12

HR & Labor Relations bills

Passed

HB 1213 – Expands job protections under Paid Family & Medical Leave and addresses concurrency with federal Family & Medical Leave Act leave

HB 1308 – Requires employers provide “personnel records” to employees

HB 1821 – Access to payroll records for prevailing wage complaints

SB 5040 – Expands interest arbitration for law enforcement to cities with less than 2,500 population

SB 5503 – Prohibits grievance arbitration settlements from requiring employees to waiving right to future claims

SB 5041 – Makes striking workers eligible for unemployment benefits

Did not pass

HB 1622 – Requires bargaining the management decision to use artificial intelligence related technology



13

Environment bills

Passed

HB 1293 – Littering penalty & plastic carryout bag law changes

HB 1497 – Amendments to Organics Management Law & solid waste cart color and labeling requirements

SB 5033 – Requiring PFAS testing of biosolids

SB 5284 – Recycling Reform Act for residential paper & packaging

Did not pass

HB 1303 – Adding environmental justice considerations to SEPA



14

General Government bills

Passed

HB 1201 – Requires planning for pet sheltering during emergencies

HB 1515 – Expanded outdoor alcohol service areas: “Libation Zones”

Did not pass

HB 1339/SB 5373 – Creates an even-year elections option

HB 1448 – Establishes a ranked choice voting systems option

HB 1710 – Creates a Voting Rights Act (VRA) “preclearance” requirement for local government

HB 1750 – Expands “vote dilution” and “abridgement” claims under the VRA



15

Public Works & Infrastructure bills

Passed

SB 5627 – Underground utility excavation practices (“Dig Law”)

HB 1549 – Responsible bidder criteria

HB 1633 – Subcontractor licensing requirements

HB 1967 – Design-build public works project bonding

HB 1543 – Compliance pathways for Clean Buildings Performance Standard

Did not pass

SB 5804 – Permanently divert PWAA revenues to fund state culvert obligations

SB 5061 – Prevailing wage at the time work is performed

SB 5176 – Prompt pay on public works projects

HB 1966 – Self-performed public works requirements



16

Finance bills

Passed

SB 5315 – Modifying local tax rate notification requirements to DOR

SB 5814 – Modifies certain sales tax to apply them to new categories of transactions – will impact city sales tax

HB 2049 – *Amended to remove change to levy limit up to 3%; Revised version increases certain school local levy authority

Did not pass

HB 1334/SB 5812/SB 5798 – Revise the property tax levy cap

SB 5770, SB 5771, SJR 8203 – Creates a new primary residence property tax exemption

SB 5796 – Establishes payroll tax of 5% on certain employers



17

Land Use & Building Codes bills

Passed

HB 1061 – Authorizes cities to allow parking across end of driveway

HB 1135 – Updating process for coming into compliance with GMA after a finding of non-compliance

HB 1688 – Authorizes electric security fences in cities that don't have codes on the topic, but allows cities to choose later to ban or regulate

SB 5509 – Childcare centers zoning mandate

SB 5558 – GMA comp plan & implementation timelines extension for jurisdictions required to update in 2026

SB 5655 – Changes to calculations regarding childcare occupancy in existing buildings



18

Land Use & Building Codes bills

Passed

HB 1039 – Authorizes City & tribe contracting for urban services outside UGA

HB 1562 – Requiring greater access to diaper changing stations in public restrooms

HB 1576 – Historic landmark designation – prohibit designation without property owner consent in most cases.

Did not pass

HB 1175 – Requiring cities to allow neighborhood cafes and businesses in residential areas

HB 1254 – Wildland Urban Interface Code reforms

SB 5719 – Requiring all but the smallest cities to use hearings examiners



19

Public Safety & Criminal Justice bills

Passed

HB 1174 – Changes to governance of court interpreters

HB 1596 – Speed-limiting technology devices for certain drivers

HB 2015 – Councilmanic 0.1% sales tax for criminal justice and new \$100 million grant program to fund officer and co-responder recruitment and training

HB 1440 – Requires higher standard for civil asset forfeitures, enables forfeiture hearings to move to municipal courts.



20

Public Safety & Criminal Justice bills

Did not pass

HB 1113 – Authorize court to release upon substantial compliance

HB 1218 – Change trial competency evaluations

HB 1399 – Law enforcement leadership eligibility & police volunteers

HB 1423 – Authority to use vehicle noise enforcement cameras

HB 1428 – Increase state criminal justice assistance by \$25 million

HB 1435/SB 5060 – \$100 million for law enforcement hiring grants

HB 1592 – Public defense funding

SB 5775 – Councilmanic public safety sales tax authority and allows cities to impose counties' unused rate up to 0.3%

HB 1056/SB 5066 – AG investigations of local police departments



21

Legislative success: Session is only the tip of the iceberg



22

Being a Strong City Advocate

<https://wacities.org/advocacy/advocacy-tools>



Regular
advocacy



Stay abreast of
the issues/bills



Tell your city
story



Communicate
your legislative
agenda



Quick check-ins
via text, email,
calls



Use AWC tools
& resources



23

To Do List: Before 2026

- ✓ Meet with your legislators
- ✓ Adopt a legislative agenda
- ✓ Arrange for regular check-in meetings during the legislative session



24

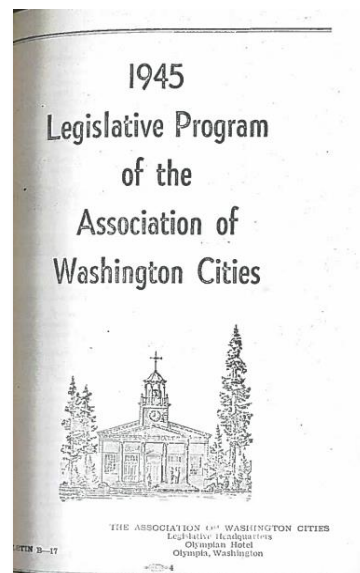
Looking ahead to 2026

- 60-day session
- Election year
- Continuing budget challenges
- Uncertainty at the federal government
- Legislative Priorities Committee work on AWC's 2026 legislative agenda has already begun
- Have suggestions for the 2026 agenda? – fill out our survey before June 5



25

Questions?



26