

AWC Advocacy Bootcamp

June 24, 2025



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Agenda

1. Why should you advocate at the state level?
2. Navigating the legislative process
3. Knowing and using your power to effectively advocate for your city
4. Learn from someone who has just done a fantastic job
5. Questions & Answer



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Why Should You Advocate at the State Level?

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Many of the budget decisions made by legislators in Olympia have a direct financial impact on cities, towns, and their residents

In short, legislators decide *who gets what. . . and who pays for what*

• **Shared revenue:**

- Liquor profits and liquor taxes
- Marijuana excise tax
- Streamlined sales tax
- Criminal justice
- 6050
- Annexation sales tax credit
- Fire insurance premium

Funding (or lack of funding) for city budget priorities and obligations:

- Pension costs
- Law enforcement and public safety
- Housing programs and grants
- Infrastructure grants and loans
- Transportation infrastructure and maintenance
- Behavioral health projects
- Capital project funding



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Legislators also enact policies that impact your city's operations and your residents' daily lives:

- Recent topics of policy bills
 - *Density mandates*
 - *Bargaining standards*
 - *Elections*
 - *Liability*
 - *Policing procedures*
 - *Conversion of existing buildings to residential uses*



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By taking an active role in advocacy, city leaders can:

- Help maintain and grow local revenues
- Stop or shape policies that harm cities or limit community decision-making
- Ensure city interests are key considerations in policy debates
- Shape political narratives
- Influence policy outcomes
- Improve the lives of city residents

“Politics is like water; it follows the path of least resistance”

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Navigating the legislative process

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The Legislative Process

- Navigating the legislative process can seem intimidating
- Full of jargon and acronyms
- Can seem complicated (and it often is)
- Can come off uncomfortably formal
- Where do I start?



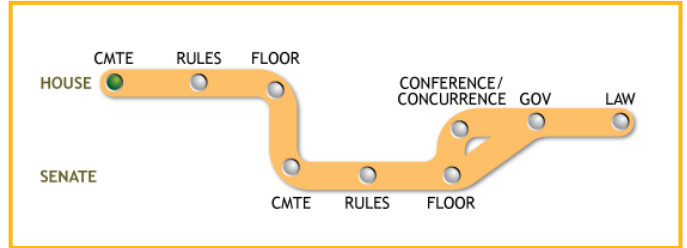
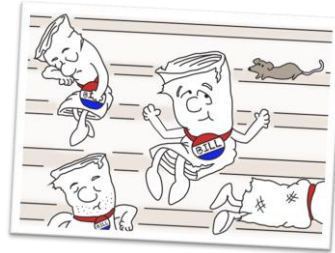
- You don't need to be a lobbyist or lawyer to engage and have your voice heard
- In fact, effective participation in the legislative process is critical for cities and city leaders
- No more complicated than the local legislative process – just a little different
- AWC has staff, resources, and tools to make engaging in the legislative process easy and accessible for you!



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How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Idea is drafted into bill form
- Sponsored by legislator
- Introduced and referred to committee
- Public hearing in policy committee
- Voted out of policy committee
- Public hearing in fiscal committee
- Voted out of fiscal committee (if applicable)
- Rules Committee
- Majority puts it on calendar for vote
- Floor vote
- Process begins in opposite chamber
- Passage of identical measures
- Signature or veto by Governor



Thousands are introduced each year - most die before becoming law



Quick facts about the Washington Legislature

- Bicameral (2 chamber) Legislature
 - **49 Senate** members
 - **98 House** members
 - **49 leg. districts:** 2 Reps. & 1 Senator
- Convenes the second Monday in January of each year
 - **60 days** in even-numbered years
 - **105 days** in odd-numbered years
- The Legislature passes the two-year budgets in odd-numbered years
- Representatives are elected to a two-year term
 - Elections held in even-numbered years
- Senators are elected to four-year staggered terms
 - Half of the membership stands for election in even-numbered years
- **Sine Die** is the last day of the legislative session



Knowing and using your power to effectively advocate for your city

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Your power as a city leader

- As elected officials and city leaders you hold a significant amount of power to influence decision makers.
- Provide access to constituents and key relationships
- Ability to give endorsements and publicity (Op. Eds, LTEs etc.)*
- Capacity to provide election assistance (organizing volunteers, fund raising etc.)*
- Provide expertise or public testimony on issues
- Ability to mobilize people for or against an issues
- Power to unite 281 cities in support or against an issue (AWC)

** Always in compliance with PDC rules*



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CITY OF Federal Way
CITYWIDE NEWS



May 27, 2025

**Mayor Ferrell and Chief Hwang Visit Capitol
 for Signing of HB 2015**



Mayor Jim Ferrell and Federal Way Police Department Chief Andy Hwang traveled to Olympia last week for the signing of HB 2015. They joined 30th District Representative Kristine Reeves, who was a co-sponsor of the bill, as Governor Bob Ferguson signed it into law.

HB 2015 improves public safety funding by providing resources to local governments and state and local criminal justice agencies. Mayor Ferrell testified to the legislature in support of the bill earlier this year.



**Collective Statement from South King County Mayors
 Regarding House Bill 1380**

January 21, 2025
 Representative Mia Gregerson
 321 John L. O'Brien Building
 PO Box 40600
 Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Rep. Gregerson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on House Bill 1380. While we understand that the intent behind this proposal is to protect those individuals experiencing homelessness and occupying the public right-of-way and other spaces, we are concerned that this bill will compromise public safety, interfere with the intended uses of public spaces, and lead to litigation rather than solutions. We are the State's partner in helping individuals experiencing homelessness get access to crisis services, substance use treatment, mental health services, health care, shelter, and other services, and we encourage you to be our partner in bringing services to these individuals.



Comment: Cities needs modest tax hike to meet growing needs

State legislation would allow cities to increase property tax levies by 3% each year, rather than 1%.

Saturday, February 22, 2025 1:30am | **OPINION** COMMENTARY



By Cassie Franklin and Kyoko Matsumoto Wright / For The Herald

Cities across Washington state are working hard to combat significant and expensive challenges, ranging from public safety to quality-of-life issues such as the drug epidemic, housing crisis and violent crime.

We're also waging a constant battle against the growing impacts of our state's 1 percent cap on property tax levy increases. This limit puts our cities in increasingly difficult positions each year as we watch inflation drive up costs, our populations grow and the demand for services increase; all while our most significant and stable revenue source, property taxes, remain stagnant.

We're joining together with other local leaders to ask the state Legislature to lift the cap on property tax increases from a maximum of 1 percent per year to 3 percent. This would give our cities a fighting chance to sustain the essential services our communities rely on while not overly burdening taxpayers, adding just \$20 to the average homeowner's annual tax bill.

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A real life example!

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Working with others at City Hall

- Getting all your elected officials involved
- Have they built a relationship with your local legislators?
- Do you invite your local legislators to visit Council meetings or to check out projects you are working on?
- Staff experts vs. electeds – use both!
- Experts can be helpful and add credibility but be wary of being too technical. Know the needs of your audience



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Legislative success: Session is only the tip of the iceberg



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Legislative Advocacy: A Year-Round Job

- Begin building a relationship with your legislators during the summer and fall before session begins (bonus points if they are up for election)
- Participate in legislative elections
 - Do your research and hold a face-to-face meeting before offering your endorsement
 - Publicly thank legislators who have helped your city and be candid about those who haven't
 - Help organize volunteers for legislative candidates you support and be visible
- Develop your city's legislative agenda
 - Keep it short and simple – one page only
 - Include AWC's legislative priorities
 - Make it public and share it (FB, Twitter, Website, etc.)
- Other ways to engage
 - Volunteer for AWC's legislative priorities committee
 - Work with other cities and towns in your region
 - Ask AWC for help



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Build relationships & communicate effectively

- Start before you need something
- Be familiar with their focus and interest
- Get into the habit of sharing information
- Make sure they know your city's story
- Be clear about what you need and why
- Don't be shy about difficult conversations
- This is a group effort – Work together



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Testifying

- Public Hearing v. Work Session
- Know your timeframe – public hearing testimony is likely 1-2 minutes. Work sessions can be longer
- Signing in – electronic sign in process
- All committees now allow remote testimony
- Following up afterwards
 - Good opportunity to email the whole committee including staff



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Written comments

- Providing written comments is also effective. Remember to stay concise
- Email the whole committee, and their LAs
- Copy the AWC lead on the issue so we can follow up
- This is a way to request amendments to bills, the more specific the better
- Legislators always prefer when alternative solutions are offered rather than complete opposition



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Communications Tips & Tricks

- Emails, letters, phone calls, meetings
- No matter what – be concise!
- Legislative Aids manage/screen these contacts
- Different approaches at different times in session
- Add individualized information to any form letter/email
- When and who to send your communications to:
 - Bill or project specific
 - Copying committee or caucus staff
 - Always copy the LA
 - Use AWC resources/information for background



When you see one of these, please follow up

AWC
ASSOCIATION
OF WASHINGTON
CITIES

action alert!

**Strong Cities
Great State**

Urgent information from your lobbyists on the hill.

Dear Mayors, City Managers, and Finance Officers:

Our records indicate that your city imposes a water and/or sewer utility tax rate above 6%. **SB 6115** would place a 6% cap on water and sewer utility taxes, unless voter approved, and would require cities with higher taxes to decrease their rates over time.

This week, the Senate Government Operations & Security Committee considered the proposal and could vote on it this week. Your Senator is a member of this committee.

Please [contact](#) your Senator as soon as possible and ask them to oppose SB 6115.

Here are some key messages to share:

- Like the state, cities are struggling to provide essential public services.
- The utility tax is a primary revenue source for cities.
- Most city revenue streams are already restricted in some way.
- Cities need to retain the local flexibility with water and sewer utility taxes.
- Locally elected officials are already accountable to voters in their communities.

Please let AWC's [Victoria Lincoln](#) or [Serena Dolly](#) know when you've contacted your Senator, as we would like to follow up on your efforts. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Association of Washington Cities • 1076 Franklin St SE • Olympia, WA 98501



March 3, 2025

Members of the Washington State Legislature:

We write to urge you to pass legislation to revise the arbitrary 1% local property tax cap that has been in place for more than 20 years—over a generation. The current cap is lower than both inflation and population growth, and cities are left struggling to keep up with rising costs of providing basic community services like police, fire, parks, and streets.

We ask you to support a modest increase that ties the cap more closely to population growth and inflation, up to 3%. This reasonable change is more reflective of the last decade's average yearly 3% inflation rate and 1.5% yearly population growth.

We understand the reluctance to act on taxes; however, our communities need more flexibility in local funding options to keep up with the rising costs for services. Lifting this cap modestly would provide a crucial, optional tool that empowers city elected leaders to make decisions close to home on behalf of their residents, when and how they need it.

Without a change, local governments cannot sustain public safety and other basic services to keep up with our residents' needs. In fact, in 2001 cities had 1 employee to serve every 80 city residents; and in 2023, cities had 1 employee to serve every 108 city residents.

For too long, local governments have patched together band-aid solutions to manage the structural funding deficit while being called on to do more with less—but we're at a tipping point.

Allowing local elected officials to raise their property tax revenues by up to 3% per year puts the decision-making power back into our communities. Local elected officials have a high rate of trust among their constituents, and they are immediately accountable to the voters. Legislative action on this issue in 2025 is not an automatic tax increase. Instead, it allows for thoughtful local debate and discussion about what will work best for each city.

Now is the time for this change. Cities must continue to provide these important community services and cannot wait another 20 years to shift the burden onto the next generation.

Please use this legislative session to pass a modest increase to this restriction on our cities.

Sincerely,

Troy Linnell, Mayor, Algona
 David M. White, Councilmember, Algonia
 Don Vanney, Mayor, Arlington
 Cheryl Rakes, Deputy Mayor, Auburn
 Kate Bakwin, Councilmember, Auburn
 Nancy Backus, Mayor, Auburn
 Lynne Robinson, Mayor, Bellevue
 Mayor Kim Lund, Mayor, Bellingham
 Michael Lillsquist, Councilmember, Bellingham
 Valerie Rosman, Councilmember, Brier

Adolfo Bailon, City Manager, Burien
 Alex Andrade, Councilmember, Burien
 Hugo Garcia, Councilmember, Burien
 David Olson, Mayor, Cathlamet
 Cathleen Koch, City Administrator, Connell
 Linda Springer, Mayor, Cosmopolis
 Regan Boli, City Manager, Covington
 Traci Buxton, Mayor, Des Moines
 Katherine Caffrey, City Manager, Des Moines
 Carma Oaks Smith, Finance Director, DuPont

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Michael Winkler, Deputy Mayor, DuPont
 Amy McHenry, Councilmember, Duval
 Amy Ocklerlander, Mayor, Duval
 Jennifer Crawford, Mayor, East Wenatchee
 Mike Rosen, Mayor, Edmonds
 Will Chen, Councilmember, Edmonds
 Jenna Nand, Councilmember, Edmonds
 Cassie Franklin, Mayor, Everett
 Judy Tuohy, Councilmember, Everett
 Paula Rhyne, Councilmember, Everett
 Hunter George, Councilmember, Fircrest
 Denise Kulseth, City Administrator, Friday Harbor
 Mary Barber, Mayor, Gig Harbor
 Holly Beller, City Administrator, Ilwaco
 Barbara de Michele, Deputy Council President, Issaquah
 Kelly Jiang, Councilmember, Issaquah
 Lindsey Walsh, Council President, Issaquah
 Mary Lou Pataj, Mayor, Issaquah
 Zach Hall, Councilmember, Issaquah
 Nigel Herbig, Mayor, Kenmore
 Erin Erdman, City Manager, Kennewick
 Chuck Torelli, Mayor Pro Tem, Kennewick
 John Boyd, Councilmember, Kent
 Zandria Michaud, Councilmember, Kent
 K.C. Kasberg, Mayor Pro Tem, La Center
 Larry Goldman, Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
 Lori Bodi, Deputy Mayor, Lake Forest Park
 Paula Goode, Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
 Phillip Hill, City Administrator, Lake Forest Park
 Semra Riddle, Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
 Tom French, Mayor, Lake Forest Park
 Tracy Furutani, Councilmember, Lake Forest Park
 Carl Florea, Mayor, Leavenworth
 David Glasson, City Administrator, Long Beach
 Sue Svendsen, Mayor, Long Beach
 George Hurst, Councilmember, Lynnwood
 Jon Nehring, Mayor, Marysville
 Tara Leininger, Mayor, Metairie Falls
 Gretchen Sagen, CFO, Montesano
 Tyler Trimble, Mayor, Montesano
 Valerie Jester, Councilmember, Montesano
 Louis Harris, Councilmember, Mukilteo
 Michael Dixon, Councilmember, Mukilteo
 Amy Arrington, City Manager, Normandy Park
 Susan West, Councilmember, Normandy Park
 Dontae Payne, Mayor, Olympia
 George Martinez, City Administrator, Pacific
 Vic Kave, Mayor, Pacific
 Kate Dexter, Mayor, Port Angeles
 Nathan West, City Manager, Port Angeles
 Rob Putsaunsoy, Mayor, Port Orchard
 Amy Howard, Deputy Mayor, Port Townsend
 Becky Erickson, Mayor, Poulsbo
 Doug Taber, Councilmember, Poulsbo

Dee Roberts, Mayor, Raymond
 Angela Birney, Mayor, Redmond
 Jessica Forsythe, Council Vice President, Redmond
 Vanessa Kitzler, City Council President, Redmond
 Armondo Pavone, Mayor, Renton
 Ed Prince, Councilmember, Renton
 James Alberson, Councilmember, Renton
 Kim-Khanh Van, Councilmember, Renton
 Valerie O'Halloran, Councilmember, Renton
 Ruth Pérez-Ralston, Councilmember, Renton
 Micki Harnois, Councilmember, Rockford
 Karen Howe, Mayor, Sammamish
 Pam Stuart, Councilmember, Sammamish
 Amy Lam, Deputy Mayor, Sammamish
 Bruce Harrell, Mayor, Seattle
 Dan Strauss, Councilmember, Seattle
 Julia Johnson, Mayor, Sedro-Woolley
 Kevin Wickenhagen, Mayor Pro Tem, Selah
 Chris Roberts, Mayor, Shoreline
 Keith Scully, Councilmember, Shoreline
 Annette Ademasu, Councilmember, Shoreline
 Carolyn Norris, Mayor, South Prairie
 Mark Kaupzlatich, Councilmember, South Prairie
 Terri Berry, Clerk-Treasurer, South Prairie
 Betsy Wilkerson, Council President, Spokane
 Lili Navarrete, Councilmember, Spokane
 Zack Zappone, Councilmember, Spokane
 Kitty Kitzka, Councilmember, Spokane
 Paul Dillon, Councilmember, Spokane
 Ben Wick, Councilmember, Spokane Valley
 Richard Muri, Mayor, Steilacoom
 Kathy Hayden, Mayor, Sumner
 Joe Bushnell, Councilmember, Tacoma
 John Hines, Councilmember, Tacoma
 Oly Diaz, Councilmember, Tacoma
 Sandesh Sadalge, Councilmember, Tacoma
 Sarah Rumbaugh, Councilmember, Tacoma
 Victoria Woodard, Mayor, Tacoma
 Thomas McLeod, Mayor, Tukwila
 Debbie Sullivan, Mayor, Tumwater
 James Wetstein, City employee, Tumwater
 Sharon Bounds, City Manager, Union Gap
 Edward Wood, Mayor Pro Tem, University Place
 Erik Paulsen, Mayor Pro Tem, Vancouver
 Kim Harless, Councilmember, Vancouver
 Sarah Fox, Councilmember, Vancouver
 Ty Stober, Councilmember, Vancouver
 Randy Hinchliffe, City Administrator, Walla Walla
 Elizabeth Chamberlain, City Manager, Walla Walla
 Linda Herald, Mayor Pro Tem, Wenatchee
 Brent Gerry, Mayor, West Richland
 Fred Brink, Mayor Pro Tem, West Richland
 Maria Keethler, Mayor, White Salmon
 Steve Gunn, Councilmember, Woodway

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Common excuses and how to respond

Cities can raise their own revenue

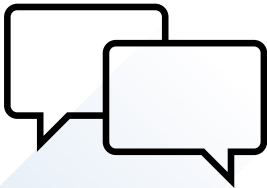
I am not on the committee

Cities want to be preempted

Cities should control their own costs

The state has other budget priorities

It's not an unfunded mandate if it is the right thing to do



Legislators' advocacy advice for city officials



Sit down eye to eye and go over your budget with your legislators



Don't just rely on lobbyists – “We need to hear directly from city officials”



Have a unified message



Reach out to legislators all year long – but the earlier the better



Come with ideas and solutions

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Review

1. We understand the importance of city leader advocacy and its role in impacting legislative outcomes
2. We navigated the legislative process
3. We have a better sense of our own power to influence the process and have seen some examples.
4. Now we are ready to use what we've learned, and the tools provided by AWC, to effectively advocate for our cities!

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Questions?