

February 17, 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,

City sign-on letter to legislators: Act now to revise the arbitrary 1% property tax cap

Sign on to AWC’s letter urging the Legislature to take action to revise the arbitrary property tax cap from 1% to an optional increase of up to 3%. Scan the QR code, or use the link below, to fill out a form indicating your wish to sign in support. See the backside to read a copy of the letter.

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