



Legislative Priorities 2021

In Washington, state government’s strength and the strength of the state’s 39 counties are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. State government’s success requires thriving, flexible, front-line implementation partners in counties. Counties’ success requires an active, resourceful, supportive partner in state government. **Here is how Washington’s 39 counties and Legislature can work together to make urgent progress on shared priorities in the 2021 Legislative Session:**

Responding to the COVID Crisis

Disease response. Adequate funding for case investigation, vaccination, and public outreach/education.

Disease containment. Adequate funding for coordination of care for people isolated in quarantine who need support beyond testing.

Behavioral health. Adequate funding for the behavioral health system, including jails.

Affordable housing. New investment in stabilizing housing situations for tenants and homeowners.

Government operations during the pandemic. Modifying Washington’s existing Open Public Meeting Act and Public Records Act to preserve their spirit while ensuring compliance.

Local budget impacts. Remove restrictions and allow flexibility for counties to spend certain funds without new unfunded mandates.

Combatting Climate Change and Protecting our Environment

Climate change. Adequate funding and flexibility to adapt any new climate change impact reduction responsibilities to local conditions.

Salmon habitat. Adequate funding for repairing or replacing thousands of fish-blocking culverts in our stream systems to ensure the state is in full legal compliance.

Forest health. New resources for improving forest health, enhancing fire resiliency, responding and containing wildland fires, rehabilitating affected areas, and coordinating prescribed burns.

Waste management. Restore lapsed funding for local garbage and recycling programs.

Growth management. Greater flexibility in managing growth, and a new, reliable, sustainable funding source for planning requirements, and funding for any new ones.

Water quality and water supply. Dedicated funding for state programs that improve water quality or support and enhance water supplies to ensure counties’ effective implementation.

Ending Racial Disparities and Social Inequities

Health disparities. Stable and adaptive funding for public health departments to increase capacity, modernize, and manage emerging threats and longstanding health impacts.

Public defense. Adequate funding for trial court public defense costs to ensure the constitutionally protected right to a defense attorney for all.

Medicaid benefits while incarcerated. Obtain a federal waiver to maintain Medicaid benefits for pretrial, incarcerated individuals.

Making Long-term Investments, Securing Long-term Solvency

Road Maintenance. Reliable, sustainable funding for county transportation budgets.

Capital investments. New investment in county sewer, water, landfill, and building the infrastructure necessary to keep communities safe and functional.

Fiscal solvency. New authority for counties to control their cost drivers and grow revenue sources that keep pace with increasing costs.