

Hot Topics

State budget

When the Governor introduced her supplemental budget in December, she filled a hole in the biennial budget of \$2.6 billion. She used \$900 million in reserves and \$1.7 billion in cuts. She immediately indicated that it was not a budget she supported; this month, she submitted a new supplemental budget that “buys back” some of the proposed cuts. The Governor’s most recently proposed budget preserves state-shared revenues allocated to cities and some key programs for local governments, including:

- Streamlined sales tax mitigation funds to jurisdictions that are negatively impacted by sourcing;
- Support to local public health jurisdictions;
- Support for criminal justice programs; and
- Appropriations to the City-County Assistance Account.

The budget still contains \$1 billion in cuts to reduce (and even eliminate) some vital services.

Please remind your legislators of the importance of state programs and funding to cities.

Street maintenance utility

HB 2618 authorizes the creation of a street maintenance utility, similar to a water or sewer utility, to serve the residents and businesses in utility areas through the preservation and maintenance of streets. Street utility rates are determined by levels of use by different classes of residents and businesses.

*Ask your legislators to support **HB 2618**.*

Stormwater

A long-term state funding mechanism is needed to support “Phase I” and “Phase II” NPDES stormwater requirements, as well as Puget Sound cleanup efforts, that impacts 137 cities. AWC is working to secure a dedicated source of funding from the state. Bills are being drafted and will be introduced soon.

Please ask for a funding mechanism that allows cities to meet their stormwater requirements.

City flexibility

Please ask your legislators to support the following bills that promote city flexibility.

Fiscal flexibility

HB 2650, HB 2749, SB 6164, and HB 2773/SB 6424, all different, eliminate some restrictions, including supplanting requirements, expand the purposes of some current revenue sources, and otherwise address restraint of existing revenues. While not all cities will benefit from each provision of each bill and may not choose to use other provisions, the package of bills is a very good start towards our goal of flexibility.

Three of the bills were heard in the House last week; we are working to secure hearings in the Senate. The Governor has been supportive of enhanced flexibility and requested **HB 2773/SB 6424** on behalf of local governments.

General flexibility

Growth Management Act (GMA)

Over the past 20 years, the state provided some funding support to meet local GMA planning mandates. The Governor pulled funding because of the state’s fiscal issues. City budgets are significantly strained, and cities don’t have the funds for local staff to complete all of the GMA update work. **HB 2916** and **HB 2992** defer local GMA update requirements for three years. **HB 2916** (our preference) also allows 10 years between updates instead of seven.

Public records

HB 2582/SB 6367 would allow public records requestors to be directed to an internet address where the responsive records can be found on the agency’s website while making provisions for requestors without internet access. **HB 2583/SB 6368** would provide for a voluntary conference between the agency and the requestor to clarify the request, which could be considered by the court in any subsequent litigation.

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Impact fee collections

HB 3067 would defer payment of impact fees to the time that a property is sold rather than when the developer applies for a permit.

Utility liens

SB 6261, proposed by the Washington Multi-Family Housing Association, specifies that cities can only collect from property owners four months of unpaid utility bills, whether or not the city uses the lien authority as the collection tool. This bill will be amended to apply to electric utilities only.

Cities continue to oppose any changes to our ability to collect delinquent utility bills from property owners.

Wrongful death

SB 6508 substantially expands the scope of liability in wrongful injury or death causes of action and would have a substantial financial impact on cities and towns by expanding the number of people who may file a cause of action in a wrongful death case and the damages for which they could seek redress.

*Ask your legislators to oppose **SB 6508**.*

Election of municipal judges

SB 6686 requires all municipal court judges to be elected. Information provided by the American Judicature Society (AJS) supports our contention that appointed judges are more insulated from undue influences arising when they must raise money to run for election and campaign. Cities continue to oppose any expansion to the requirement that judges must be elected.

*Ask your legislators to oppose **SB 6686**.*

Criminal gang intimidation

HB 2415 establishes penalties for criminal gang intimidation and other gang activities. This bill would help cities and towns dealing with growing problems with gangs.

*Ask your legislators to support **HB 2415**.*

Permitting local governments to limit house-banked social card games

HB 2873 provides local jurisdictions with a tool to limit house-banked social card games within their boundaries and reduces uncertainty by legalizing prior efforts by local jurisdictions to limit house-banked social card games.

The bill does not change or hinder a city's ability to completely ban gambling.

*Ask your legislators to support **HB 2873**.*

Photo enforcement

HB 2780 places additional restrictions on how a city may use red light photo enforcement, including limiting the maximum fine to \$25.

AWC has concerns on this proposal. It would negatively impact a city's ability to recover the costs of implementing a photo enforcement program.

Coordination between local law enforcement and the department of corrections

HB 6316 creates a system giving local law enforcement officers more information about offenders' community custody status. It allows them to arrest an offender and suspend their custody status if the officer has reasonable cause to believe an offender has violated a condition of community custody.

*Ask your legislators to support **SB 6316**.*