



**King County**

## **King County 2015 State Legislative Agenda**

King County, with more than 2 million residents, is the economic engine of the State of Washington. King County is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, and its population is expected to increase 30 percent by 2040. It seeks to invest in the human, environmental, and built infrastructure necessary to accommodate this growth and to support Washington's economic competitiveness, as King County represents half of the state economy.

Unfortunately, over the past several years, reductions in funding and policy changes at both the state and federal levels have compounded one another, and local governments have few tools to ensure critical services remain intact. As the government responsible for local services, the County must be given the ability to address critical regional needs for our residents and businesses.

The County's legislative agenda reflects partnerships with its cities, employees, community agencies, and the state with the shared objective of ensuring King County remains a thriving hub of economic development and job creation. These key policy objectives further support the county's Strategic Plan and its focus on efficiency, partnerships, and customer service.

### **Revenue Reform: Providing Local Governments with Adequate Tools to Provide Services**

Counties are in a budgeting trap: The state grants counties few revenue tools and places further constraints on some of those limited authorities. Without change, counties can never escape this structural revenue gap to maintain current levels of service for an increasing population. King County strongly supports the WSAC Fiscal Sustainability Initiative in partnership with counties statewide.

- Revise the annual limit on property tax to include inflation and population growth.
- Monitor the mental illness and drug dependency (MIDD) sales tax levy.
- Diversify counties' revenue sources.
- Provide greater local control over sources like the criminal justice sales tax.
- Modify state law that allows county general fund money based on increased population density to be transferred without consent of counties.

### **Meaningful Resources for the Safety Net: Meeting our Needs in Mental Health and Beyond**

King County has highlighted the accumulated impact of state cuts to health and human services programs for years. The recent Supreme Court ruling on psychiatric boarding is an irrefutable sign that more must be done to provide reasonable care. At the same time, King County is working diligently to lead the way on Medicaid expansion and full integration of health care and behavioral health.

- Support legislative efforts to expand long-term local and state capacity in mental health and substance abuse. This will require a significant commitment to both capital and operating assistance, as well as additional inpatient beds both locally and at state hospitals.
- Adjust the Mental Illness & Drug Dependency (MIDD) levy to better meet the needs of people suffering from mental illness and addiction, including extending the MIDD supplantation language at 30% by postponing the planned 2015 stairstep down to 20% as originally outlined by state law.
- Amend 2014 legislation for Communities of Health and full integration: support a functional all-payer claims database, and extend the timeline for early adopters of full integration.
- Grant counties dedicated revenue sources for public health to ensure adequate and sustainable funding.
- Employ funding and tools to meet residents' increasing needs for a wide range of services, including 2-1-1, a phone number for people to call for health and human service information and referrals and other assistance to meet their needs.

### **Keep the Region Moving: Delivering on Transportation for Today and Tomorrow**

Funding mechanisms supporting both roads and transit are fundamentally flawed, and the County is struggling to provide basic levels of service. As the region continues to grow at an exponential rate, we need to invest in transit and roads now to preserve our mobility, competitiveness, and quality of life.

- Support state-level efforts to invest in state projects and in local needs, including unincorporated areas where counties are the only local government available to residents.
- Explore ways to pursue increased transit options, including Sound Transit Phase 3.
- Endorse local revenue options for municipal governments to invest in community infrastructure and services, including unincorporated county roads.
- Honor the state's commitment to reconnect the Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) at I-405 (Wilburton).

### **Seizing Opportunity: Investing in our Community Assets**

Fostering a vibrant arts community is a critical asset for both our residents and visitors. Likewise, increasing the amount of available workforce housing and promoting tourism enrich our community.

- Supports the Cultural Access Fund and other local tools for arts and culture.
- Request flexibility in administration and investment of hotel/motel revenues, including –with fiscal prudence– bonding for housing and tourism capital projects while respecting city priorities and protecting revenue streams for ongoing operating programs.

### **Winning on Water: Taking State Action on Water Quality**

There are as many contributing factors to water quality as there are reasons to love Puget Sound and our rivers, creeks, and watersheds. This year provides an opportunity to take meaningful steps forward.

- Seek approaches to water quality standards that balance improvement in human health with economic development considering the region has many industries, such as agriculture, which depend on water and water-related uses for their livelihood and financial success.
- Develop a robust set of state and local funding tools for water infrastructure and to ensure the long-term health of Puget Sound.
- We strongly support preservation of salmon recovery funding and state resources for habitat protection and restoration projects and programs.

### **Unintended Consequences: Keeping State Laws in Alignment with Reality**

- Confront any legislative efforts to penalize King County for its settlement with public defenders in accordance with the *Dolan v. King County* decision in 2011.
- Clarify and integrate the medical cannabis and recreational marijuana statutes to better support effective law enforcement, land use laws, and public health objectives, e.g., deterring youth access.
- Align statute with legislative intent of police accountability through body cameras.