

Housing

Livable communities offer a variety of affordable housing choices, nearby employment opportunities, an economically viable commercial sector, good schools, safe neighborhoods, quality public services, parks and open space, efficient transportation systems and utility infrastructure. To promote livable communities, governments should sufficiently fund transportation and infrastructure that provides the framework for a community's quality of life and lays the essential groundwork for accommodating quality commercial, industrial and residential growth. Furthermore, these objectives should be met through market-driven approaches that foster a wide-range of urban, suburban and rural housing choices at all price levels.

To achieve this goal, the Chambers will:

- Support policies that promote an appropriate jobs-to-housing ratio by:
 - Improving OFM population projections to include relevant data about local economies, relevant market factors at the national, state and local levels and anticipated economic/job growth projections
 - Encouraging countywide planning policies to account for enough homes within the regional housing market sufficient to accommodate employment growth
- Support policies that accommodate growth by:
 - Clarifying the intent of the Growth Management Act to accommodate growth by planning for the availability of a variety of residential densities and housing types
 - Ensure sufficient buildable land capacity for housing and employment growth
 - Provide for "no net loss" of housing and employment opportunities
 - Provide incentives for housing opportunities that accommodate growth
- Encourage performance measures to help communities determine how well they are accommodating growth and ensuring communities make adjustments to plans by adopting reasonable measures necessary to accommodate growth and provide housing opportunities
- Support modification to the condominium laws and insurance reform to encourage builders to construct dense housing without the constant fear and expense of class action lawsuits

Technology

Washington State is a leader in technology. To ensure continued technological advancements and investment in technology infrastructure, it is critical for the state to maintain a regulatory environment conducive to business growth.

The Chambers will support legislative action that will:

- Encourage fair and robust competition to create greater consumer choice
- Ensure regulatory consistency by treating like services alike, regardless of the industry providing the service
- Retain tax incentives for technology research and development
- Support policies that encourage private sector investment in infrastructure and development of advanced communications technologies, including public-private partnerships to increase broadband availability and adoption
- Oppose unnecessary regulatory restriction on emerging, beneficial technologies

Transportation

The State must ensure sufficient investment and long-term funding for our transportation system, which is essential for a strong economy, the sustainability of our businesses, and the livability of our communities.

To achieve this goal, the Chambers will:

- Support targeted state investment to increase roadway capacity, transit, and other alternative transportation modes
- Support continued investment in freight mobility and multi-modal projects
- Support additional revenue resources available to local jurisdictions
- Support alternative funding mechanisms including public-private partnerships and tolling
- Recognize the coordination and integration that already exists among transportation agencies and support maintaining the local control and accountability of local transit agencies

Economic Development & Competitiveness

Snohomish County employers must compete successfully, both locally and globally. The Chambers support legislative actions that increase competitiveness and stimulate economic growth for all Snohomish County businesses, while continuing to attract new business and industries to our region. These activities may include public infrastructure investment, the promotion of entrepreneurship, and targeted incentives for high-tech industries.

To achieve these goals, the Chambers will:

- Support programs and provide funding for infrastructure that supports economic development and community revitalization
- Support organizations like the Small Business Development Center, Washington Manufacturing Services, and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center that promote entrepreneurship and small business development
- Support Snohomish County's high tech and emerging industry clusters by encouraging:
 - Tax incentives for high tech industries where needed for global competitiveness
 - Funding new higher education enrollments in science, technology, engineering and math to support high tech industry clusters and technology based jobs
 - Increased resources and curriculum coordination between K-12, community / technical colleges, and higher education for career and technical training

Regulation

The Chambers believe the regulation process can be unduly burdensome. The solution includes increased and ongoing Legislative oversight, increased use of sunset provisions and "one-stop" or centralized issuance of licenses and permits.

To achieve this goal, the Chambers:

- Recommend the Legislature develop, implement and oversee a specific and on-going process to provide systematic oversight of all regulations of business by State and local government

Education—Pre K-12 through Higher Education

To remain competitive in the global marketplace, an educated citizenry is key. This means that Washington State must commit to reaching a new standard of excellence in its educational system making access to educational opportunities at all levels a primary focus.

To achieve this goal, the Chambers support:

- Increased production of bachelor's degrees in the region in high demand fields through:
 - Creation of a 4-year university in Snohomish County with a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) emphasis
 - Expansion of alternative post secondary education options (university center, expanded partnerships with four year institutions) at local community colleges
- Opportunities that encourage and strengthen early childhood education programs
- Competitive professional compensation and benefits to attract and retain best educators
- Strong workplace training programs to prepare students to meet the demanding challenges in today's job market
- Improved math and science education at the K-12 level
- Increased production of community college technical/professional degrees and certificates that meet local needs in emerging technology and other high demand fields

Health Care

The Chambers support policies and programs that promote quality based programs and accessible health care services for all citizens. This approach encourages a review of the current regulatory environment to reduce unnecessary regulation and evaluate programs moving forward and increase opportunities to provide insurance coverage.

This approach is predicated on three basic principles:

- Access to healthcare will be affordable
- The delivery of health care services will be transparent and value driven
- Health benefit plan structures will encourage personal responsibility, reward healthy behaviors and properly align incentives

To achieve this goal, the Chambers will:

- Support market based solutions that result in more affordable and accessible healthcare, especially for individuals, families, small employers and the uninsured
- Support policies that result in attracting more health care providers and competition
- Oppose regulatory options that will negatively effect providers
- Support planning for and funding of emergency preparedness for catastrophic natural disasters or epidemic outbreaks
- Support the process and provide feedback to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Healthcare
- Support a menu of health insurance choices for employers and their employees including association health plans and health savings accounts

Taxes & Fees

Over 50 percent of Washington's revenue is collected in business related taxes and fees compared to 35-40 percent in neighboring western states. To close this gap and enhance the ability of Washington business to compete more effectively, tax and fee policies that burden Washington businesses must be addressed.

To achieve this goal, the Chambers will:

- Support repealing the paid family and medical leave act. If not repealed, the FMLA should be funded through employee payroll deductions, not employee/employer contributions or workers' compensation unemployment insurance reserves
- Support efforts to lower workers' compensation costs by creating a settlement option for workers, employers and L&I, better defining "occupation disease", establishing provider networks and reevaluating the wage replacement rate.
- Support efforts to reform Washington's unemployment insurance program that work to clarify and limit good causes for voluntary quitting and ensure tax rates are reduced when the trust fund balance is high
- Support changes to the state's B&O tax structure including increasing the B&O tax exemption to help small and struggling businesses, maintaining B&O tax credits for specific industries, establishing a retail sales tax collection allowance and the simplification and lowering of B&O tax rates for all businesses
- Support repealing the state estate tax
- Support eliminating the annual automatic minimum wage increases and to allow for tip credit as most competitive states permit
- Support restoring spending limits
- Oppose mandated "pay or play" medical insurance and/or single payer insurance
- Support reasonable standards for city designation including citizen elected governance, transparent budgets, and provision of municipal and essential services

Climate Change

The Chamber supports the achievement of greenhouse gas reduction goals through conservation, public education, economic incentives and study of market-based mechanisms.

Although it is our strong preference for a national approach to regulating GHG emissions, the Chambers in principle support legislative actions that:

- Encourage investment in energy conservation
- Encourage development and use of renewable energy while granting utilities significant flexibility towards achieving goals
- Create standard protocols to ensure consistent, accurate and verifiable reporting of greenhouse gases
- Produces real and quantifiable carbon emission reductions (including offsets)
- Give credit for early actions taken to voluntarily reduce carbon emissions
- Promote new technologies and jobs that address greenhouse gas reduction
- Require full participation by all sectors in carbon emission reduction goals based on 1990 baseline emissions and does not unduly burden business and power generation sectors
- Are affordable and do not economically disadvantage Washington businesses regionally and globally

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Legislative Agenda

JGAC

Joint Government Affairs Committee

