



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 22, 2020

TO: WACO Board of Trustees

FROM: Greg Zempel, WACO Vice President and
Kittitas County Prosecuting Attorney

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Legislative Committee regularly reports to the Board of Trustees. The October report is both a report to the Board and the full membership of the committee's past year.

2020 Session Recap

As Chair, I want to first extend my sincere thanks to the members of the 2020 Legislative Committee:

- Tim Davidson, Cowlitz County Coroner
- Alison Sonntag, Kitsap County Clerk
- Josie Delvin, Benton County Clerk
- Jeff Gadman, Thurston County Treasurer
- Steve Drew, Thurston County Assessor
- Mike Lonergan, Pierce County Assessor/Treasurer
- Diana Bradrick, Whatcom County Auditor
- John Snaza, Thurston County Sheriff
- James Nagle, Walla Walla County Prosecutor

It was a fast-paced session and WACO set a new record for most bills dropped in a short session. This is on top of a large number of bills brought back to life from last session, which also saw a record in the number of bills dropped overall. What this means is that we had less time to discuss our bills, and more bills to watch.

This year we were able see the passage of four 2020 WACO Priority Bills, and one hold over 2019 WACO Priority Bill. With the passage of these bills we have secured even year election funding, adding millions to counties' general fund accounts, created hiring parity between County Sheriffs and municipal police departments; significantly increased corrections training, funding, and created for the first time training certification; fixed assessment calendar loopholes; and extended the same tax lien foreclosure system for "stick-built" homes to mobile homes.

SUCCESSFUL WACO PRIORITY BILLS FOR 2020:

- HB 2858 - Assessment Rolls Filing (Assessors)
- ESHB 2421 - Election Cost Reimbursement (Auditors)
- HB 1750 - County Sheriff Vacancies (Sheriffs)
- 2SHB 2499 - Correction Officer Certification (Sheriffs)
- HB 2512 - Mobile Home Delinquent Taxes (Treasurers)

Although five of our priority bills did not pass the legislature, all were given hearings in the policy committee, and several were just short of passing out of the legislature. In each instance WACO staff was in contact with affiliate leadership to address what happened and used this as foundation to begin our interim work. Unanticipated priority issues likely to dominate the 2021 session factor into WACO legislative team dialogue with affiliates on viability of these proposals in the near term.

PRIORITY BILLS THAT DID NOT MAKE IT THROUGH THIS YEAR:

- HB 2261/SB 6184 - Eliminate 3-Day Waiting Period for Marriage (Auditors)
- HB 2260 - State Pay for Dependency Action Publication (Clerks)
- HB 2347 - Eliminate Court-Ordered Bond Increase on a Clerk (Clerks)
- HB 2432 - Coroner Certification and Accreditation (Coroners)
- HB 2560 - Reduce Wait Time for BLEA (Sheriff)

Throughout the course of the legislative session WACO staff work on a number of bills that impact counties. Some of these bills call for larger effort coordination, often of multiple affiliates. This year was no exception. With issues ranging from fixing the senior exemption language, to a youth voter outreach pilot program, WACO assisted its affiliates on a broad range of legislative fronts.

AFFILIATE PRIORITY BILLS ON WHICH WACO LEGISLATIVE TEAM PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- SB 6319 - Senior Exemption Fix (Assessors)
- HB 2405 – C-PACER (Auditors, Treasurers)
- HB 2588 - Special Purpose District Financial Transparency (Treasurers)
- SB 6313 - Youth voters (Auditors)

Each week during the session WACO provided (through our vendor LobbyGov) an affiliate-specific report to each Legislative Committee member. The Legislative Committee member made the determination on frequency, delivery, and data needs that go into the report in order to fit that individual affiliate's needs. Once a week, WACO provided a report containing data for ALL affiliates to the Legislative Committee for sorting and disbursement to their affiliate members based on their individual needs.

Day on the Hill 2020

The committee received positive feedback on the 3rd annual WACO Day on the Hill. Turnout was highest yet (74, compared to 55 last year) and greater number of appointments with legislators (22 versus 15 last year). Striving for continuous improvement, the committee has discussed several ideas for Hill Day 2021, although at present time serious doubt exists as to whether an in-person event will be possible.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2021 SESSION

The Legislative Action Plan created by Executive Director Jennifer Wallace and approved by the Board last year called for a year-round legislative committee and as such the committee has met monthly to develop policy proposals and platforms and plans for the 2021 session. Needless to say, COVID-19 has had a major impact on dialogue, and the weekly conference calls hosted by WACO identified policy and statutory barriers the committee has discussed and that have informed a cross-affiliate legislative proposal focused on continuity of operations.

Included in materials for the Board and the WACO membership meeting are 9 affiliate proposals for priority bills in addition to the cross-affiliate continuity of operations bill proposal. They represent significant dialogue and development with WACO staff and more recently with the Legislative Committee as a whole.

The 2021 Legislative Committee will be chaired by the incoming WACO Vice President, with membership reflecting the legislative chairs from each affiliates' association:

- Steve Drew, Thurston County Assessor
- Skip Moore, Chelan County Auditor
- Alison Sonntag, Kitsap County Clerk
- Josie Delvin, Benton County Clerk
- Tim Davidson, Cowlitz County Coroner
- James Nagle, Walla Walla County Prosecutor
- John Snaza, Thurston County Sheriff
- Jeff Gadman, Thurston County Treasurer

The Legislative Committee encourages all WACO members to take advantage of opportunities to learn about and participate in legislative-related activities, including:

- Inviting WACO staff to present training on legislative relations at one of your conferences

- Indicate interest to your affiliate President and Legislative Chair in being available to meet with legislators and testify on bills as needed.
- Follow status of bills of relevance updated daily on the WACO website during session
- Talk to the WACO Executive Director about the full range of legislative-relations services available to affiliate members, including technical assistance and written advocacy and information materials.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Discuss and move to accept the committee's report.