

CITY OF SEATTLE

2009 State Legislative Agenda

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Linda Cannon, Deputy Director

Genesee Adkins, State Legislative Director

Tim Gugerty, State Legislative Liaison

David Foster, State Legislative Consultant

SESSION PRIORITIES – 2009

Public Safety – We strive to ensure all people feel safe and protected in their homes, businesses, and on our streets. This includes changing state law to comply with federal law regarding involuntary mental health commitment, prohibiting those who have been involuntarily committed for fourteen days from possessing firearms. We will also seek greater flexibility for local governments who opt to ensure the safety of their communities through local actions to regulate firearms or weapons in public areas. We will seek support for the prevention of youth gang violence, building on the first steps in HB 2712 from the 2008 legislative session.

Housing Resources – Seattle believes that housing—its availability and affordability—is critical to the quality of life of our residents and neighborhoods. With continued strong population growth in the region and an uncertain housing market, it is important to provide adequate housing opportunities to all and to put resources and incentives to work towards bridging the affordability gap for those who need it most. We seek to maintain state resources for the Housing Trust Fund at \$200 million per biennium as well as resources for transitional and short-term rent programs for those who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The City also supports more effective incentive zoning statutes, additional incentives for private employers and developers to provide housing, and support for housing financing tools like the Housing Everyone Financing Tool (HEFT).

Health Care

It is critical that a stable, long term revenue source be identified for public health. We also support efforts to ensure all persons have accessible, affordable, and culturally competent health care. We believe all persons in Washington State should have access to affordable prescription drug coverage, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, comprehensive mental health, and dental health services. We also support identifying enhanced and stable funding for drug and alcohol treatment programs.

Seattle Center – Tourism and cultural activity are vital elements of the economic engine of Seattle. In order to maintain and improve the programming offered to the public, Seattle Center warrants additional attention and resources. We request the legislature's authorization of a less-than-1% revenue-neutral shift of the existing hotel/motel tax, to be directed toward Seattle Center tourism improvements.

Regional Transportation – We believe that a well-maintained and supported transportation system is critical in advancing economic prosperity, meaningfully reducing greenhouse gas levels, and accommodating projected population growth in a sustainable manner. We support efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled and to promote increased use of new and existing tools to move people and goods through cleaner, more efficient choices. We believe the State should fully fund the transportation infrastructure system, particularly when there is an identified safety risk. The State should also play an increased role in funding transit and transportation choices as part of our state system. We support legislative efforts to improve bicycle and pedestrian

safety, including the Safe Routes to School program, and to examine strategies that enhance local enforcement of traffic laws. We support the continued progress on and funding toward the Alaskan Way Viaduct corridor. We support efforts to develop a full funding package for replacement of SR 520. Seattle supports tolling and congestion pricing as a demand management tool and encourages development of a regional road pricing system to help fund transportation alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. Seattle strongly supports an economy-wide cap-and-trade program that includes all major sources of emissions, including natural gas and transportation.

Education

The state constitution mandates the State to provide K-12 education for all children, including special needs children. Although the City of Seattle does not operate, manage, or fund public education, successful public schools are the heart of our neighborhoods and a quality education for all students is the key to the social and economic vitality of our city and state. We are committed to the success of our Seattle schools and believe the State should continue to provide for the full funding of K-12 education.

STATEMENT OF POLICY – 2009

The policy statements below represent ongoing priorities for the City of Seattle and its residents. The City urges the State Legislature to initiate and support legislation that advances the following principles:

Civil Rights

Every person, including undocumented immigrants, has the right to live, work, learn, feel safe and play free from discrimination. We support local discretion with regard to implementing I-200 restrictions in both education and employment opportunities. We support legislation that prevents discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and lending practices. We also support efforts to reduce racial disproportionality in the areas of economic equity, environmental justice, criminal justice, health, and education.

Climate Protection & Environment

We believe all levels of government should implement practices and policies that provide for strong climate protection and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. We believe the State should assert leadership through bold policy implementation to ensure we are well positioned when the federal government takes action.

Seattle supports a hard cap on greenhouse gas emissions and supports the aggressive implementation of a cap-and-trade program. We support flexible state funding to local government efforts to combat climate disruption. We support measures to mitigate the impact of increased energy costs to lower income households. The Western states' and Seattle's climate protection goals are economy-wide; therefore, a cap-and-trade program that includes all major sources of emissions, including natural gas and transportation, is vital to both the City's and State's abilities to meet their goals. The urgent need for a comprehensive, economy-wide approach to emission reductions is precisely why Seattle does not support delaying the inclusion of transportation fuels and natural gas in a cap-and-trade program until 2015.

Economic Development

We support state efforts to provide local governments with financing tools and remove needless regulatory barriers in order to attract and retain businesses. We also support incentives that promote increased job and apprenticeship opportunities, wage progression, and retention for workers. We encourage efforts aimed at increasing the participation of Women and Minority Owned Businesses (WMBE) in state and local contracting.

We support efforts to enhance our tourism industry, including performing arts and cultural organizations and institutions. We are supportive of state funding for Phase III of the University of Washington's Medicine/Life Science South Lake Union campus as well as for the School of the Environment on the University of Washington campus.

Education

We believe it is the State's responsibility to fully fund K-12 education, and to implement programs that close the achievement gap. We also believe that the provision of state-wide, universal pre-K instruction assures that all children enter elementary school ready to learn. We support enhanced and stable funding for arts in public education.

Seattle believes that implementation of the Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System is key in setting a standard for universal pre-K, and that Seattle could be an excellent model for early implementation. We support improved access of low-income four-year-olds to preschool and continued monitoring of the Department of Early Learning's progress toward a culturally relevant statewide kindergarten readiness assessment.

During challenging economic times, it is also particularly important to support community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities as they provide access to retraining and workforce development opportunities. Public educational institutions are also a major employer in Seattle and across Washington State and have a considerable impact on our economy.

Elections and General Government

We believe the State of Washington should pay for all elections related to state government and state offices. We support efforts to facilitate the secure use of electronic signatures for local governments. We support local governance structures that allow flexibility among jurisdictions to meet requirements, such as open public meetings, in a way that reflects the organizational structure of the jurisdiction and does not interfere with public access. Seattle feels strongly that the State should not pre-empt or otherwise prohibit local governments from establishing local policies that address their own diverse communities' needs and priorities.

Energy

We support the development of a long-term energy strategy that includes planning for adequate energy capacity and supply. We also support measures which assist in our continued ability to meet our zero greenhouse gas emissions goal. We support the inclusion of low-impact hydroelectric power as a renewable energy source in any legislation related to renewable energy portfolio standards. We also support opportunities for greater enforcement of building codes to ensure energy efficiency.

We note the need for adaptation research in the North Cascades/Skagit Watershed to better understand the effect of climate disruption on hydropower and energy markets more broadly. We also support increased opportunities for solar production as well as an expanded role for zero-emission vehicles. We believe that new technology jobs are critical to a strong green economy, and we are supportive of the recently established Green Industries Job Training Account.

Growth Management, Land Use and Annexation

We support the Growth Management Act (GMA) as the primary means of planning for growth. We support the further integration and streamlining of state land use and related statutes while preserving environmental protections. We support better integration of land use and transportation.

We support efforts to protect and provide local government tools to implement “growth pays for growth” policies. We support state funding to assist jurisdictions in meeting planning requirements and infrastructure needs of the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act. In addition, we support funding to help support the infrastructure and operating needs of cities where growth is being concentrated or where annexations occur. We support legislation that would allow Seattle to receive a sales tax credit if it annexes all or a portion of the North Highline unincorporated area.

Hazardous and Solid Waste

We support measures to reduce toxins entering the waste stream and support cleaning up hazardous waste sites through state assistance to local governments for the handling, treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.

We support development of common industry standards for recycled products, funding for recycling facilities, the promotion of product stewardship, and legislative initiatives to increase waste reduction and recycling. Specifically, we support product stewardship for fluorescent lighting products, surplus pharmaceuticals, as well as framework legislation to ensure manufacturers’ responsibility for waste products, such as fluorescents, paint, and carpeting.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management

We support efforts to protect the public from terrorist threats and believe funding should be based on threat and risk assessments, both foreign and domestic. It is also critical that the State implement measures and provide funding to prepare our communities for natural disasters. We support legislation protecting information regarding emergency preparedness and critical infrastructure. Finally, we support efforts to balance the need to effectively combat terrorism while protecting civil liberties and freedoms.

Human Services

We strongly support maintaining and enhancing state funding for critical human services programs, and preserving the human services safety net to support our vulnerable populations and maintain healthy communities. We support opportunities for self-sufficiency, poverty relief, and upward mobility. We also support modification of asset limits in public benefit programs. We support improving child care subsidy policies and professional development coordination to improve the quality of early education, pre-school, and after-school programs. Seattle also continues to support the legislative goals of the Area Agency on Aging.

Infrastructure/Finance

Seattle believes that growth and density in the region should be focused in urban areas, which will require infrastructure improvements and community amenities to accommodate the expected increase. To meet this goal Seattle supports local control and flexibility in funding sources and additional tools to help attract people, businesses and jobs to the City and State. This includes:

- Removal of the requirement that the sale of certain city properties must first be made available for purchase for free parking;
- An exemption for car-sharing entities from the state rental car tax;
- Maintaining and improving Seattle Center as a vibrant regional attraction;
- Further clarification that cities can enact a use tax on brokered natural gas;
- Additional funding options to help construct jails located in King County; and
- Extension of the hotel/motel tax sunset for arts and culture in King County in 2020 and beyond, and the authority to spend down the arts endowment between 2013 and 2020.

Law & Criminal Justice

We support holding offenders accountable while striving to relieve demands on the adult and juvenile justice systems. We support changes to existing law to allow a local jurisdiction to employ a local ordinance that adds assault by vehicle as one of the exceptions to current statute, for prosecution in cases of serious injury or death. Seattle also supports greater flexibility in the successful use of photo radar speed enforcement on local arterials. We also support tools for local law enforcement agencies in ensuring security and safety on transit through revised unlawful transit conduct statutes.

Libraries

We support the current governance structure of libraries that provides for an independent library board. We also support open access to library materials and information on paper and in electronic form.

Parks

Preserving and protecting our natural resources is a major tenet in maintaining an urban quality of life. We encourage efforts to preserve and strengthen state support for parks, recreation, and open space programs.

Planning & Development

We support clarification that would allow courts to issue civil administrative warrants for conducting housing, property, and health inspections in order to enforce the City's codes. We oppose efforts to diminish current authority to access property for public safety and other business purposes. We support modifications to state condominium statutes to ensure that condominium conversions are fair and appropriately address the various difficulties associated with transition. Seattle also seeks legislation that brings towncars and executive sedans into regulatory parity with limousines and taxicabs. We also support legislation that encourages sidewalk cafes while providing appropriate

protections for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Sidewalk cafes foster community connectivity and encourage economic development.

Revenue

We strongly support maintaining and enhancing local taxing and fee authority and local revenue options. We do not support unfunded mandates. Seattle also supports enactment of comprehensive reform of the Washington State tax system to provide revenue stability for cities and counties and a more progressive state tax structure.

Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence

We are committed to ending domestic violence and sexual assault for our residents. We continue to be concerned about juvenile victims of commercial sexual abuse. We support the provision of services, financial assistance, and other resources to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in order to support their safety and ability to leave abusive relationships. We also support continued study of sex offender recidivism as well as the review of the Department of Health and Human Services' regulation of domestic violence perpetrator programs.

Sustainable Farming and Healthy Food

We support efforts to establish sustainable food and farming systems, increase food security, and improve access to healthy food for all people. We support food policies that encourage the use of renewable energy resources, minimize energy use and waste, develop new markets for farmers, promote sustainable agricultural systems and farmland management, preserve farmland, and assist small farmers and farm laborers. We support the establishment of a State Food Policy Council that develops, recommends, and coordinates food system policies.

Telecommunications and Cable

Seattle is committed to ensuring all our residents are provided affordable, equitable access to telecom and cable services, through competition and consumer protection. Seattle supports preserving local franchising authority to assure local control of our rights of way, ability to guarantee the highest consumer protection standards, protection of local revenue, build-out requirements in all communities and sufficient public, educational and government access channels. We oppose legislation that diminishes these priorities. We also oppose legislation that would diminish cities' existing authority to construct and operate a municipal broadband network serving the public.

Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Seattle will work with other local jurisdictions and the State to help assure appropriate financial participation by all levels of government for critical human services. To that end, Seattle supports State efforts to assist with the implementation of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness including:

- Measures to require state institutions, including the Department of Corrections, and the foster care system to create informed and responsible discharge practices;

- Measures to facilitate development of low-income and affordable housing; and
- Efforts to use existing funds more efficiently, working to fund provision of services and housing in a coordinated fashion.

Tribal Governments

We respect and uphold the unique sovereign status of tribes. We understand their treaty rights, the importance of their efforts to create a sufficient tax base, and their reliance on specific sources of revenue to operate programs for the benefit of their people.

Water Stewardship

We support the efficient use of water and promote environmental stewardship, including funding for salmon recovery. We support legislative efforts to address a variety of water issues, including in-stream flows, protection of municipal water rights, disputes over water rights and implementation of watershed planning. We support improvements in water quality through effective storm water management programs that set goals which are achievable and not cost-prohibitive. We support maintaining current funding for priority environmental programs related to water quality. Seattle also supports the removal of disincentives to shoreline restoration embedded in the Shoreline Management Act. We support the Puget Sound Partnership's efforts to restore and protect the health of Puget Sound.