



# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2022

## GREATER SPOKANE VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

We are the catalyst for building relationships, driving collaboration, and championing opportunity in the Greater Spokane Valley.

509-924-4994

[info@spokanevalleychamber.org](mailto:info@spokanevalleychamber.org)

[www.spokanevalleychamber.org](http://www.spokanevalleychamber.org)

**BUSINESS CLIMATE** We work to create a vibrant business climate that promotes innovation and allows business to thrive. A healthy business climate is vital to ensure that our region stays competitive, sustainable and attractive to future business. We support legislation that promotes economic growth, develops a strong workforce and reduces the tax and regulatory burden.

**TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE** We work to maintain and develop efficient transportation and infrastructure systems that power economic growth. Transportation is critical to our region's business climate and economic future. As the region continues to grow, we need to accommodate the growth with projects that effectively maintain and preserve infrastructure and increase capacity. We support legislation and infrastructure objectives that increase accessibility, reliability, and safety while providing sustainable funding and local control for operations, maintenance and preservation.

**QUALITY OF LIFE** We work to enhance our vibrant community with diverse opportunities to live, work and play. We are committed to maintaining a high quality of life for individuals and families in our area through community initiatives, as well as advocating for citizen access to housing, entertainment and a healthy environment.

**EDUCATION** We work to support an education system that meets the workforce demands of our region. Investment in education increases the opportunities of our students and meets the needs of our business community. Developing a skilled workforce of the future depends upon a robust education system that serves students of all ages. We support a fully-funded education system with clear and challenging academic standards, expanded options that are innovative and affordable, and a system that operates with accountability, efficiency and transparency.

**HEALTH CARE** We work to develop access to robust services that improve the health of our community. Expanding access to health care and the resources needed to identify and address public health issues is vital to a strong economy. We support legislation that will improve access to physical and behavioral health services and strengthen the healthcare workforce.

# Top Legislative Priorities



Our Top Priorities represent those that we believe will have a great and lasting impact on our region. These priorities will increase economic opportunity, improve the quality of life, and enhance the vibrancy of the Greater Spokane Valley.

## Business Climate

**Long Term Care** - we strongly support efforts to abolish or amend the Long Term Services and Support (LTSS) Act to allow employees the freedom to make the best decision for themselves and their family. At a minimum, the legislature should honor the intent of the original bill and amend the LTSS to allow for the opportunity to opt out at any point they obtain private sector insurance.

## Transportation & Infrastructure

**Sustainable M&P Funding** - we strongly support a focused effort to create sustainable funding for maintenance and preservation of our transportation infrastructure that gives local control over how the money is spent. A sustainable funding source, with local control, will allow WSDOT regions to properly maintain the current and future transportation system.

## Business Climate

**Natural Gas** - we strongly support preserving natural gas as an affordable energy choice for both residential and commercial properties. As an affordable energy source, natural gas plays an integral role in maintaining the economic vitality of our local business climate, and it can facilitate a cost-effective transition to 100% clean electricity to address climate change.

## Quality of Life

**Childcare** - we strongly support measures that would reduce the regulatory burden on childcare providers making childcare more accessible and affordable for all families. Specifically, we support regulatory streamlining, reduction of barriers-to-entry, and increased wages for workers in the childcare industry to increase the supply of childcare facilities and choice for parents.

## Business Climate

**Emergency Powers** - we strongly support amending the current emergency powers structure to give our elected legislative representatives and general public more of a voice in policy making during an emergency declaration. Specifically, we support SB 5039 which would require a vote of the legislature after 30 days of the emergency declaration to extend the order.

## Education

**K-12 Education Workforce** - we strongly support allowing retired school employees to work a maximum of 1080 hours per year, rather than the current 867 hours, in order to help alleviate substitute teacher shortages in our region.

# Additional Priorities

## BUSINESS CLIMATE

Create a dynamic business climate that promotes innovation and allows business to thrive.

- **Local Economic Development Funding** - we support HB 1333 which would extend the existing local sales tax credit for economic development in rural counties. The GSVCC and our regional partners will pursue an expansion of this vital program to include border counties, such as Spokane County, to provide a permanent and sustainable source of regional economic development funding.
- **Growth Management Act** - we strongly support amending the GMA to address significant population fluctuations and enhance local government's role in the GMA planning process. Amendments should account for and accommodate growth in the Spokane region. Further, we encourage the state to allocate adequate funding to local jurisdictions to effectively implement planning directives from the state.
- **Unemployment Insurance Relief** - we strongly support mitigating increases on unemployment insurance (UI) premiums by paying down rate classes with state surplus funds or federal relief funds when feasible. UI costs are a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and are a major burden for small businesses trying to recover from the economic downturn.
- **Vaccine Mandate** - If vaccine rules must be adopted on the private sector, GSVCC supports adoption of the rules put forth by OSHA, and urges the state not to adopt a state plan that goes beyond the federal government's requirements.
- **Insurance Premiums** - we support the reimplementation of credit scores to be used in determining insurance premiums. The elimination of this tool, used by insurance companies, without a vote of the people's representatives, has resulted in higher insurance premiums for many individuals at a time where the cost of living is already increasing. This puts an undue burden on Washingtonians and should be reversed.
- **Regulation & Taxation** - we believe it is the free market that allows the entrepreneurial spirit to thrive, innovation to increase, and business to grow. Heavy handed government interference, increased taxes and regulations continue to hinder business growth in Washington. Reducing burdensome regulations and taxes will create a stronger and more competitive business climate.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Maintain and develop efficient transportation and infrastructure systems that power economic growth.

- **Pines Road/BNSF Grade Separation Project** - we support the \$19.3 million funding request to construct the Pines Road Grade Separation project. Pines Road is one of the region's key transportation corridors, carrying residential, commercial, and industrial traffic from Trent Avenue (SR 290) to I-90. This project will provide grade separation at a crossing that 60 trains travel through each day, blocking traffic movements for nearly four hours. The project also improves the intersection of two state highways, Pines Road (SR 27) and Trent Avenue (SR 290). Pines Road is the primary access to almost 230 acres of undeveloped mixed-use, commercial and industrial land. Total project cost is estimated at \$29 million. Thus far, the City has secured \$9.7 million and project design and right-of-way acquisition are underway. The project will be shovel ready this year.
- **Spotted Road Realignment** - we support the funding request for \$5 million toward the realignment of Spotted Road to mitigate safety concerns. The intersections of Spotted Road with inbound and outbound Airport Drive and westbound US Hwy 2 are areas of high incident crash rates, including fatalities. Additionally, a portion of Spotted Road is located inside the Runway Protection Zone for Runway 21 which is not compatible with FAA safety standards. Spokane International Airport is leading this \$28.75 million project.
- **Advocating With Our Regional Partners** - we are committed to working collaboratively with the Washington Legislature and regional partners to identify and support sustainable transportation funding sources. GSVCC would support state and regional transportation investments as part of the federal infrastructure package currently being contemplated by Congress. GSVCC will work during the 2022 Legislative Session for passage of an additive state transportation package subject to the following principles:
  - Protects current committed funding for the region and maintains funding for its designated purpose (corridor),
  - Makes certain any state transportation spending package is reflective of the Spokane region's proportional share and appropriate for Spokane projects and programs,
  - Reflects the work of our community partners and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) process, and
  - Preserves programs for targeted transportation programs and investments including Freight Mobility Strategic Investments Board (FSMIB), Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), County Road Administration Board (CRAB), and Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB).
- **Rail Extension at Spokane International Airport** - we support the request for \$1.7 million in state funding which adds 3,100 track feet of new track, including one rail turnout. This expansion will optimize the opportunity for multimodal freight movement in the vicinity of the Transload facility.
- **Transload Facility Connection** - we support Spokane International Airport's request for \$1 million to connect the transload facility to the regional sewer system.
- **Felts Field** - we support Spokane International Airport's request for \$500,000 in the capital budget to expand parking infrastructure at Felts Field.

# Additional Priorities

## QUALITY OF LIFE

Enhance our vibrant community with diverse opportunities to live, work and play.

- **Criminal Justice Reform** - we strongly support amendments and clarifications to several law enforcement related bills enacted during the 2021 legislative session to ensure there aren't unintended consequences negatively impacting the delivery of law enforcement services, including the critical community caretaking function law enforcement performs to maintain public safety.
- **Police Use of Force** - we advocate to authorize officers to use physical force that is objectively reasonable under the totality of the circumstances when necessary to prevent a person from fleeing a lawful detention, carry out an involuntary detention, assist in placing a youth in family initiated treatment, take a child into protective custody, carry out a law or court order to take a person into custody, and when acting in good faith pursuant to the Rescue Doctrine or an officer's community caretaking function.
- **Police Tactics** -
  - **Chokeholds and Neck Restraints** - HB 1054 conflicts with HB 1310 in regards to chokeholds and neck restraints. We advocate to align 1054 with 1310.
  - **Vehicular Pursuits** - we advocate to improve public safety by amending RCW 10.116.060 to allow for vehicular pursuits when an officer has reasonable suspicion that a person in the vehicle has committed an offense where the public safety risk of failing to apprehend the individual is greater than the public safety risk of the pursuit.
- **Decriminalization of Narcotics** - we support finding a permanent solution to the Supreme Court's Blake Decision that holds those in possession of narcotics accountable, and which would keep our community safe.
- **Personal Income Tax** - we do not support a statewide tax on personal income. Any change to the tax code that seeks to make the code more fair should not include a state income tax.
- **Childcare Deregulation** - we support deregulation measures that would allow childcare providers to charge private paying families less than childcare receives for subsidy.

## HEALTH CARE

Develop access to robust services that improve the health of our community.

- **Nurse Licensure Compact** - under the state's emergency COVID-19 order, out-of-state licensed nurses have been allowed to practice in Washington State, and it's time to make it permanent. GSVCC continues to support passage of SB 5247 (Sen. Padden) to include Washington State in the National Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). SB 5247 would allow nurses who are credentialed and licensed in other NLC states to practice in Washington. Passage of this legislation is a long-time GSVCC priority for our regional healthcare partners and military families.
- **Behavioral Health Workforce** - we advocate to increase the behavioral health workforce by increasing funding in the Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Fund, and by signing on to a multi-state compact allowing mental health professionals to cross state lines and work in Washington.
- **Medical Residencies** - we seek to work creatively with our Legislators to find different avenues of funding for Graduate Medical Education for the Greater Spokane Valley.
- **Healthcare Workforce** - we strongly supports legislation that will address the need for workforce in the healthcare sector. Examples of legislation include an increase in loan repayment funding for nurses, funding for one-time grants to community colleges to expand training programs, or funding for grants to support students in continuing health care careers.

## EDUCATION

Support an education system that meets the workforce demands of our region.

- **Nurses and Counselors** - we support prototypical funding for nurses and counselors in K-12 schools to support our region's students.
- **Teachers Salaries** - we support implementation of a regionalization factor in determining the districts that receive an additional 6% to allocate toward salaries, to ensure competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff.

