



# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## GREATER SPOKANE VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

# 2024

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**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.

**DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE** We work to maintain and develop infrastructure systems that power economic growth. We promote growth by supporting projects that preserve existing infrastructure and development, while strategically increasing capacity to drive economic development. We support legislation and infrastructure investments that optimize development opportunities through increased accessibility, reliability and safety, while retaining local control to meet the unique needs of our communities.

**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 & WORKFORCE** We 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.

**HEALTHCARE** 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 improves 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

**Regulation & Taxation** - we believe the free market allows the entrepreneurial spirit to thrive, innovation to increase, and business to grow. Heavy handed government interference, increased taxes, and regulation continue to hinder business growth in Washington. Reducing burdensome regulations and taxes will create a stronger and more competitive business climate.

## Business Climate

**Energy Security** - we oppose blanket mandates that diminish our state's energy resilience. We support safeguarding our dams, the state's preeminent source of non-intermittent, low-carbon power. Innovation is key to meeting our state's decarbonization benchmarks, and we believe state policy should not dictate single pathways to decarbonization. Instead, we support a technology-neutral approach.

## Business Climate

**Long Term Care** - we support legislative efforts that enable individuals to opt out of the mandatory long-term care tax. We believe in empowering employees to make a personal choice for themselves and their families' needs. It is essential for the state to adhere to the law's intent and ensure that consumers can easily transition from the state's program if they choose.

## Development & Infrastructure

**Sustainable M&P Funding** - we support leveraging surplus funds for the maintenance and preservation of transportation infrastructure. The legislature, in partnership with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) regions, should uphold existing commitments while enabling local authorities to effectively upkeep our transportation system now and into the future.

## Quality of Life & Community

**Public Safety** - we advocate for increased state investment in public safety personnel and infrastructure. In 2024, the legislature should address Washington's ranking as having the lowest number of law enforcement officers per capita. Sufficient funding should be provided for the full criminal justice system, including probation officers, legal counsel, and judges.

## Education & Workforce

**Education Workforce** - we advocate for enhanced support and investment in workforce programs at high schools and colleges to keep the training programs affordable and accessible. Through public-private collaboration, these programs can align student learning outcomes with current work environment demands, ensuring students acquire immediately applicable and in-demand skills.

# Additional Priorities

## BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Create a dynamic business climate that promotes innovation and allows business to thrive.
- **Local Economic Development Funding** - we support preserving and enhancing state-shared revenue streams and oppose eliminating or narrowing tax credits and incentives that exist to kick-start the economy and create job growth.
  - **Growth Management Act (GMA)** - we strongly support amending the GMA to give local governments more opportunities to participate in the planning process. There should be flexibility in implementing provisions of the Act and changes to the law should be made to account for growth in our region. We encourage lawmakers to provide localities with adequate funding to implement statewide planning directives.
  - **Climate Commitment Act (CCA)** - we are alarmed by the unintended consequences of this program and the orders to conceal the program's costs from consumers. To improve the program, CCA exemptions and funding should be more accessible, revenue derived from transportation fuels should be used solely for transportation purposes, and predictability should be prioritized.
  - **Clean Buildings Act (CBA)** - we encourage the state to revisit the CBA to expand the flexibility of compliance timelines and pathways, providing time to vet emerging, innovative technologies and strategies that are consistent with pollution reduction goals.
  - **Minimum Wage** - we believe the state should improve the predictability of the statewide wage mandate by addressing the cost of living adjustment mechanism used when calculating annual increases. The current timeline leaves businesses too little time to adequately account for such a drastic increase in their largest expense.
  - **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** - we oppose broad restrictive extended producer responsibility legislation that increases the costs of recycling packaging and products. A successful solution will not put Washington businesses and consumers at a competitive disadvantage to other states and countries.
  - **Tax on Business** - Washington's state and local tax system should support growth-oriented tax policies that improve the competitiveness of Washington business in the national and global marketplace. We oppose statewide taxes on personal incomes.
  - **Regulatory and Litigation Costs** - recent labor laws passes in Washington have opened a pathway for individuals to directly sue employers for non-compliance. Their escalation in 'qui tam' litigation is generating significant legal expenses. It is crucial for legislators to address this issue by refining these laws to ensure businesses are not burdened with excessive litigation.



## QUALITY OF LIFE & COMMUNITY

- Enhance our vibrant community with diverse opportunities to live, work, and play.
- **ICSVPAC** - we support the Idaho Central Spokane Valley Performing Arts Center (ICSVPAC) request for funding from the Washington State Legislature for the construction of a multi-use facility in the City of Spokane Valley, which will significantly impact and benefit the entire Inland Northwest Region economically and culturally.
  - **Mt. Spokane** - we support Mt. Spokane's USDA grant application to upgrade their Community Service Center. The grant would be used to improve the facility's ADA accessibility, build childcare facilities, and enhance the overall visitor experience.
  - **HUB Outdoor Field Project** - we support HUB's Sports Center Outdoor Fields Project as it will impact economic development, especially in tourism and hospitality industries. It will also benefit our community by providing more options for play, leading to better outcomes for the mental, emotional, and physical health of our youth and families.
  - **Army National Guard Facility** - we support the land-swap or purchase efforts between the WA Dept of Natural Resources and the Washington State Military Department to establish an Army National Guard Readiness Center in the City of Liberty Lake, which will offer amenities for the community and region.
  - **Spokane Valley Cross-County Complex** - we support the \$600,000 state funding request that would allow Spokane Valley to develop a cross-country sports complex on the north side of the Spokane River at Flora Road. This development would attract significant outside visitors and economic activity, while addressing the regional need for a cross-country/cyclocross facility.
  - **Condominium Liability Reform** - we encourage legislative support for diverse and affordable housing options in our region. We support efforts to incentivize the development of condominium housing, an ideal option for many first-time home buyers.
  - **Wildfire Relief** - to help those who lost their homes and livelihoods due to recent wildfires, we encourage the state to update land use legislation to allow landowners to rebuild their homes under the building codes in place when the disaster occurred.
  - **Behavioral Health & Mental Health Support** - we support continued state funding for greater access to behavioral health services, including mobile rapid response crisis teams, co-responders, and diversion programs.
  - **Police Tactics** - repeal or reform HB 1054 so local officials can develop pursuit protocols for auto theft and specific property crimes. Local officials should have the means to authorize an effective and safe pursuit when there is an immediate threat to public safety.
  - **Retail Theft** - we encourage the State to address organized retail theft in a manner that does not put undue burdens on the victimized businesses.
  - **Traffic Fatalities & Drive Safety** - we advocate for legislative action to enhance road safety and reduce traffic fatalities.

# Additional Priorities

## DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

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

- **Broadband** - we support policies that foster the expansion of broadband technology statewide. By eliminating obstacles, we aim to bridge the digital divide, particularly in rural areas.
- **Spotted Road Realignment** - we support the funding request for \$5 million in state matching funds for a Federal USDOT RAISE grant to fund an important \$29 million safety and mobility improvement project in the Spokane International Airport's Runway Protection Zone. The realignment of Spotted Road will address significant traffic and aviation safety concerns at the inbound and outbound intersections with Airport Drive.
- **Truck Rail and Transload Spur Connection** - we support the \$2.5 million funding request in state matching funds that extend a mile of rail east of the Trunk Rail Transload facility to allow further industrial and logistics development. This project extends rail access into Airport-owned property to provide for light industrial and commercial development opportunities.
- **I-90 from Barker to State Line** - we support funding the construction of a third lane on Interstate 90 from Barker to the Border of Washington and Idaho.
- **Advocating With Our Regional Partners** - we are committed to working corroboratively with the Washington Legislature and regional partners to identify and support sustainable transportation funding sources. GSVCC will support state and regional transportation investments as part of the federal infrastructure package currently being contemplated by Congress. GSVCC will work during the 2024 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),
  - Ensures any state transportation spending package reflects the Spokane region's proportional share and is 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 (FMSIB), Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), County Road Administration Board (CRAB), and Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB).

## HEALTH CARE

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

- **Reimbursement Rate for Medicaid Patients** - we support cost-neutral outcomes for our hospitals' care for the poor and vulnerable. We support setting the Medicare rate floor for all Medicaid professional health service rates.
- **Healthcare Workforce** - we advocate for policies that enhance the healthcare workforce. We support improving educational and training opportunities in the healthcare field, such as financial incentives for nursing education, investment in community college programs, and other initiatives that assist students pursuing healthcare careers.
- **Behavioral Health Workforce** - we advocate for increasing 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.
- **Bed Readiness Programs** - we support additional funding for Bed Readiness Programs, which enable hospitals to discharge patients who no longer need hospital-level care into safe, appropriate care settings as the patient awaits transition to long-term placement or other outpatient services. This program leads to positive outcomes for patients while alleviating hospital capacity issues.
- **Mergers & Acquisitions** - we support the ability for hospitals to enter appropriate mergers and affiliations freely. Healthcare mergers in our state have led to continued access to healthcare services for patients in local communities across the state.

## EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

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

- **Educator Shortages** - we support updated to the prototypical funding model, to include substitutes, nurses, para-educators, and counselors in K-12 schools to support our region's students.
- **Higher Education Affordability** - we support the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship and the State Need Grant and encourage the state to continue improving accessibility through affordability.
- **Workforce Housing** - we identify a workforce housing crisis emerging in Spokane and ask the state to remove the present barriers to the growth and development of housing.
- **School Construction Formula Modifications** - we support increasing state funding for school construction by revisiting the area-cost allowance and the square-foot-per-student allocation for school construction.
- **Childcare** - we strongly support measures that reduce the regulatory burden on childcare providers, making childcare more accessible and affordable for all families. We support streamlining the regulatory process and reducing barriers to entry in the childcare industry.
- **Regional Initiatives in Dental Education** - we support the UW & EWU joint proposal request of \$4.7 million to expand the capacity and footprint of the Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE). The program aims to increase the number of dental students trained per year from 8 to 16 and double the time students spend in Spokane by adding a second year of dental curriculum at EWU Spokane.