



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY.
EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING.
OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sixty-five years after the passage of legislation establishing the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO), WACO is thriving in challenging times for government on all levels.

WACO has proven to be a fiscally responsible and transparent organization focusing on three key areas of operations: Legislative Advocacy, Outreach and Engagement, and Education and Capacity Building. With a total budget of \$1.1 million dollars (of which just under 25% is passed through to the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys for training), WACO has been able to sustain increased training and education, successful legislative advocacy, and increased our member services and outreach efforts.

The 2024 Annual Conference held at the Historic Davenport in Spokane, Washington Brought together 175 WACO members and staff to experience education and training, meetings, and networking with each other and over thirty vendors.

In addition to the WACO conference, WACO hosted twelve online trainings, a monthly packed lunch, and assisted multiple affiliate groups with their conferences and training needs. All WACO trainings were recorded for members to reference and view at any time on our website.

The 2024 legislative session saw four WACO priority bills passed: addressing harassment of elections officials, simplifying in-state change of address, better alignment of duties in dependency cases, and the unclaimed remains holding period.

Additionally, the 2023 priority, regarding voters pamphlets also passed as well as the Sheriffs' vehicular pursuits initiative.

In addition to policy bills, the 2024 session held positive budget news with the inclusion of the second half funding for the Clerks' LFO collection grant, and funding for a legal internship program.

Sixty-five years in WACO has increased its presence with the legislature with a proven track record of success on behalf of our members, increased the frequency and types of trainings offered, and engaged with more members than any time in the past two decades. WACO looks forward to growing with our members into the next sixty-five years!

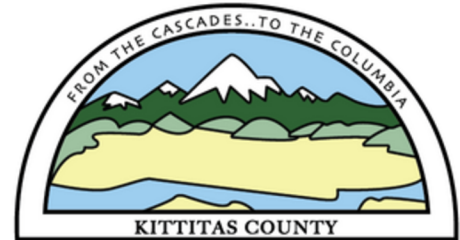


TIME TO LEAD

I am pleased to present you with WACO's annual report for 2024. The purpose of our annual report is to overview our past year activities and accomplishments and provide transparent reporting of our operations and finances. We organize our report by the areas of activity our membership has consistently voiced as their priorities: Legislative Advocacy, Education and Capacity Building, and Outreach and Engagement.

Membership associations like WACO depend on not only a highly-skilled and experienced staff, but upon leadership and involvement of the members themselves. At best, it should be a reciprocal relationship of members both gaining and strengthening leaderships skills through their involvement with their peers as well as contributing their skills to strengthen the association overall. It is essential for membership associations to survive and thrive, but in these hectic times in which we live, more difficult than ever. This is why I have selected "Time to Lead" as my 2024-2025 theme, to identify and operationalize new strategies to encourage and support WACO members to become engaged in the association and to take on leadership roles that will benefit themselves and their fellow elected officials.

I hope you will join with me this year and take advantage of the many opportunities to engage meaningfully in your association. I know you will find it as beneficial and rewarding as I have.



**PRESIDENT AMY CZISKE,
KITITAS COUNTY TREASURER**

Amy Cziske





OUR VISION

The Vision of the Washington Association of County Officials is to be a forum open to all county Assessors, Auditors, Clerks, Coroners, Prosecutors, Sheriffs, and Treasurers, where initiatives for better county government are nurtured and differences are reconciled; to act as a collective voice for all WACO members; and to serve as a conduit between WACO and local, state, and federal governments.

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Washington Association of County Officials is to support each county official as he/she executes the constitutional and statutory duties and responsibilities of the office.

OUR VALUES

Our organizational values are our standards. These values define how WACO will conduct its work:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Collaborative | Efficient |
| Competent | Inclusive |
| Consistent | Innovative |
| Constructive | Member-Driven |
| Non-Partisan | Respected |
| Productive | Responsive |
| Professional | Transparent |
| Progressive | Trusted |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF	01
---------------------------	----

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY	02
----------------------	----

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT	04
-----------------------	----

EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING	06
-------------------------------	----

FINANCIALS	08
------------	----

SCHOLARSHIP	10
-------------	----

WACO STAFF



JENNIFER WALLACE
Executive Director



TIMOTHY GRISHAM
Deputy Director



TIFFIN MORENO
Finance & Administration
Manager



CELLA HYDE
Member Services
Manager

WACO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Amy Cziske, President
Kittitas County, Treasurer

Linda Hjelle, Vice-President
Snohomish County, Assessor

Paul Budrow, 2nd Vice-President
Okanogan County, Sheriff

Danny Hagen, Secretary/Treasurer
Skagit County, Assessor

Adam Kick, Immediate Past-President
Skamania County, Prosecutor

Dan Lindgren, Assessors Trustee
Grays Harbor County, Assessor

Thad Duvall, Auditors Trustee
Douglas County, Auditor

Scott Tinney, Clerks Trustee
Lewis County, Clerk

Craig Morrison, Coroners Trustee
Grant County, Coroner

Jon Tunheim, Prosecutors Trustee
Thurston County, Prosecuting Attorney

Rob Snaza, Sheriffs Trustee
Lewis County, Sheriff

Tereasa Summers, Treasurers Trustee
Garfield County, Treasurer

John Wilson, Trustee at Large Position 1
King County, Assessor

Tom Konis, Trustee at Large Position 2
Spokane County, Assessor

Jeff Gadman, Past-President
Trustee at Large Position 3
Thurston County, Treasurer

Lisa Frazier, Trustee at Large Position 4
Mason County, Treasurer

Katie Sloan, Trustee at Large Position 5
Adams County, Clerk



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

With over 1,000 new bills introduced in 2024, and only 340 passed (of which included 2023 bills), the 2024 legislative session may be remembered by its swift cutoff calendar, and cramped hearing schedule just to get through the number of bills. This is not uncommon for a large election year – but this year proved to be difficult for many bills to move through the steps needed for passage. Just as a matter of illustration the Clerks dependency bill introduced in 2023 required 24 legislative actions (steps) to find passage.

At the 2023 WACO Conference membership approved six priority bills, and one additional subject area of interest:

- **Statewide Aerial Imagery Program**

(HB 1990) Directs the Consolidated Technology Services Agency to create an aerial imagery program for the purpose of providing enterprise level pricing for aerial imagery services to state agencies, local governments, special purpose districts, and tribal governments.

- **Addressing Harassment of Elections Officials** **(HB 1241)**

Made harassment of an election official a class C felony, as well as allowed election officials who are harassed to apply for the address confidentiality program.

- **Simplifying In-state Change of Addresses** **(HB 1962)**

Made the method of changing your voter registration address that was once available only to persons moving within one county available for all voters – simplifying the process.

- **Better Alignment of Duties in Dependency Cases (HB 1205)**

Provided that in a child dependency or termination of parental rights proceeding, the petitioner, rather than the court clerk, is responsible for publishing notice in a legal newspaper where the notice by publication is required

- **Unclaimed Remains Holding Period (HB 1974)**

Decreased the holding period for unclaimed remains from 90 to 45 days.

- **PTSD as an Occupational Disease Designation for Coroners/ME and Staff (HB 2031)**

Listed PTSD as an occupational disease for certain Coroner and Medical Examiner staff.

- **Support Services for DV Victims Filing Protection Orders**

We know going into session that the Aerial imagery program bill would be a heavy lift – as it had a hefty fiscal implication on a tight supplemental budget cycle. We were told by leadership going into session not many “new spending” bills with large budget implications would move forward. But we made great headway on the bill – and the interim talks with stakeholders and legislators will be a valuable asset when approaching this bill again in 2025.

Similarly, we were informed by Senate leadership going into session that the PTSD bill would likely die in committee due to concerns not related to the Coroners or added cost. The bill received wide support and media coverage providing a good platform to explore in 2025.

We saw four of our 2024 priority bills passed:

- **Addressing Harassment of Elections Officials (HB 1241)**
- **Simplifying In-state Change of Addresses (HB 1962)**
- **Better Alignment of Duties in Dependency Cases (HB 1205)**
- **Unclaimed Remains Holding Period (HB 1974)**

Additionally, the **2023 WACO priority bill regarding voters pamphlets (HB 1272)** passed this session.

In addition to policy bills, we saw some positive budget news with the inclusion of the second half funding for the Clerks LFO collection grant. This will provide a roadmap for future discussion on a more sustainable manner to work through old orders for restitution and other legal financial obligations.

The budget also provided funding for a legal internship program for prosecutor and public defense offices across the state that was presented in **SB 5780**. This is the first step to help address the shortage of prosecutors in our state. We are optimistic that further talks will prove fruitful in 2025.

The Sheriffs saw the vehicular pursuit initiative pass the legislature. This has been a legislative priority for WSSA for three plus years, and will give law enforcement more tools for apprehending those suspected of committing a larger number of crimes than current statute allows.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan directs the Board and Staff to increase coordination among our members and raise awareness of the needs of Washington's counties.

Ongoing Services include:

- Organize and convene WACO's Annual Conference.
- Produce materials describing the role of counties and elected county officials.
- Support Trustees at Large and Affiliate Representatives in outreach and engagement with WACO members. Host dialogue and work groups on current topical issues of concern to affiliate organizations.

The Outreach and Engagement impact strategies are:

- Expand à la carte support service offerings to meet identified needs of WACO affiliate organizations.
- Increase coordination with peer organizations and affiliate leadership.
- Create accessible and inclusive opportunities for members to build relationships, coordinate, and learn from one another.
- Raise awareness of county needs and WACO's role and value



In 2024 the WACO website received 17% views than in 2023, with an increase of 38% for users. This marks the second consecutive year of growth since the single year decrease in 2022 (our only year of decreased web traffic since 2015).

The Courthouse Journal newsletter held steady in 2024 with the number sin 2022 and 2023. In a statistically unrecognizable yearly average with 2023 – 2024 is marked by increased usage in December over the previous year, with a slight dip in the early spring. The open range for the newsletter is 32.5% of our membership. Note: This metric is only triggered by “read receipts” from various providers. Differences in network certificates and cookies reduce this number from the “real” readership.

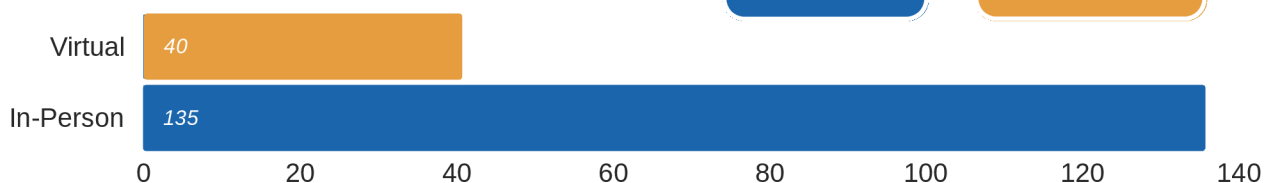
X, formerly known as Twitter has changed its analytics platform away from a free platform to a paid platform. Based on the cost and potential return on investment for the time being we have refrained from utilizing this now paid mechanic. While we have not abandoned usage of the social media platform – WACO staff has increased targeted direct communications with members to increase engagement to a high level of success.

WACO’s direct communication initiatives have resulted increased participation from members in a variety of ways. These initiatives have resulted in broadening the scope of requested education and training, with members and their teams feeling invited to provide areas of interest and need. They have also resulted in an uptick of annual conference participation and attendance, with historically less involved affiliate groups beginning to more fully utilize the conference as a networking, education, and support-building event.

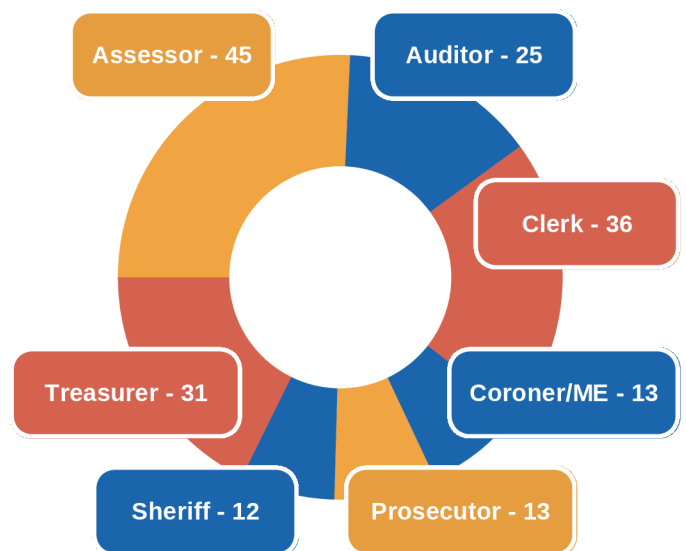
66TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WACO’s 2024 Annual Conference at the Historic Davenport in Spokane was a massive success! With 175 WACO members and their staff in attendance both in-person and virtually, 30+ exhibitors and vendors sharing industry leading knowledge, and amazing education sessions on emerging topics, the 2024 conference truly created a platform for WACO members to connect, learn, and build trust together.

ATTENDEE TYPE



AFFILIATE ATTENDEES



EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan directs the Board and Staff to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of our members through Education and Capacity Building. Ongoing services include:

- Deliver Annual Conference education sessions and Newly Elected Officials training.
- Host live and virtual training events and serve as a hub of educational resources.
- Provide technical services to record trainings and events.

The Education and Capacity Building impact strategy is to provide enhanced training and targeted services to support the roles and responsibilities of our members.

Annually the Education Committee plans for the provision of quality education opportunities that support WACO members and their offices. The Committee endeavors to make WACO a go-to entity for its members, partners, and citizens on county matters involving the memberships' roles and duties.

Each year the Committee selects training topics for the membership. Educational trainings and programs include tools for being a county official that advance WACO members' skills, knowledge, and available resources as well as collective wisdom on county government operations.

The following training (among other affiliate requested training) was held in 2024:

- Legal Representation for Elected Officials, presented by Greg Banks, Island County Prosecutor
- RFP/RFQ Best Practices, presented by the WA Department of Enterprise Services
- Improving Employee Morale and Wellness
- Effective Performance Measures
- Digital Archives Best Practices, presented by the WA State Archives; Office of the Secretary of State
- Investing for Small Counties
- EEOC Discrimination and Reasonable Accommodation
- Sexual Harassment training – Presented by WA Counties Risk Pool
- Recruiting: Creating a Culture of “You Want to Work Here”, presented by WSDOT
- Under Resourced, Understaffed, and the Unfunded Mandate: How Do You Stretch Resources When You Cannot Get an FTE and New Funding, LEAN in.
- AI Best Practices, Presented by WaTech
- Effective Lobbying Strategies, Presented by WACO Staff

Trainings sessions are recorded for members to reference and view past the training date. WACO now hosts a robust library of training videos online for members and their staff to reference at their convenience.

WACO PACKED LUNCH SERIES

WACO’s Packed Lunch series, which runs the second Wednesday of each month, continues to be a massive success. Attendance at sessions has been steadily growing, with many members beginning to bring their deputies, chiefs of staff, and administrative support to sessions that could benefit them. As demand for this regularly scheduled series grows, WACO’s ability to secure industry leading presenters has expanded tenfold.

In 2024, WACO partnered with the Washington Department of Revenue, the Office of Financial Management, the Washington Counties Risk Pool, the Washington Department of Enterprise Services, the Washington State Archives, Parabol, the Center for Creative Leadership, and others to provide a robust offering to members. These sessions covered recruitment and retention, leadership, communications, regulatory requirements, procurement and general operation, and many additional topics.

The 2024 series ended with a record-breaking 119 registered WACO members and staff.

FINANCIALS

Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Goals:

Financial Sustainability: Establish a sustainable funding plan aligned with WACO's changing service delivery model.

As an IRS 501c3 tax-exempt charity in good standing, WACO continuously seeks ways to improve through both independent audits of finances and procedures, as well as through internal improvements. WACO is funded not only through county assessments but also sponsors and vendors who attend our annual conference, contracts with local government divisions as well as interest earned from our reserves.

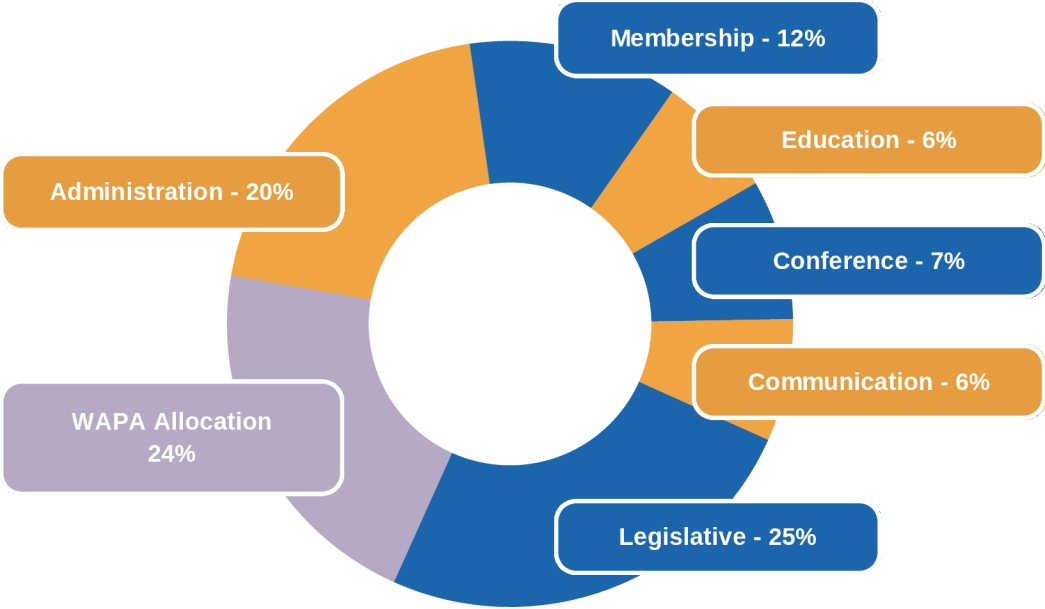
The Association is following the policies that are in place and is on the path to a more consistent budgeting plan, so funds are available when needed. Funds are used towards its mission, programs, and activities, as well as critical areas for which WACO has significant interest, such as with the Washington Counties Building partnership with the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), the Newly Elected Officials Conference (NEO), technology and equipment replacement, and professional services specifically for legal fees and the State Auditor's Office (SAO).

In July 2023, the WACO Board of Trustees adopted a 2024 budget with anticipated revenue of \$1,041,282 an anticipated expenditure of \$1,041,282. This created a balanced 2024 budget.

In 2024, as per policy, \$261,876 (24.25%) of WACO funds were provided to WAPA to support the continuing civil legal education for prosecuting attorneys and their staff, and other WAPA functions. At year's end, WACO had actual revenues of \$1,070,475 and actual expenditures of \$974,618. Revenues were higher than budgeted as more conference exhibitors attended and conference sponsorship was higher than expected. There was unanticipated interest income received from our banking sweep and higher interest rates WACO received upon renewal of a CD. 2024 was the first year WACO participated in a sweep account and therefore, WACO budgeted on the lower side, cautiously. WACO saved money on expenditures by the staff using accrued vacation, changing IT providers as well as holding two of their board meetings in Olympia rather than other, more expensive, locations around the state. Unfortunately, due to severe weather WACO had to cancel the scheduled annual President's Retreat that was included in the 2024 budget. With the combination of both the increase in revenue and a decrease in expenditure, WACO Executive Officers approved the transfer of funds to the reserve funds listed above. This resulted in a positive 2024 that allowed the Association to become even more ready for the future of WACO.

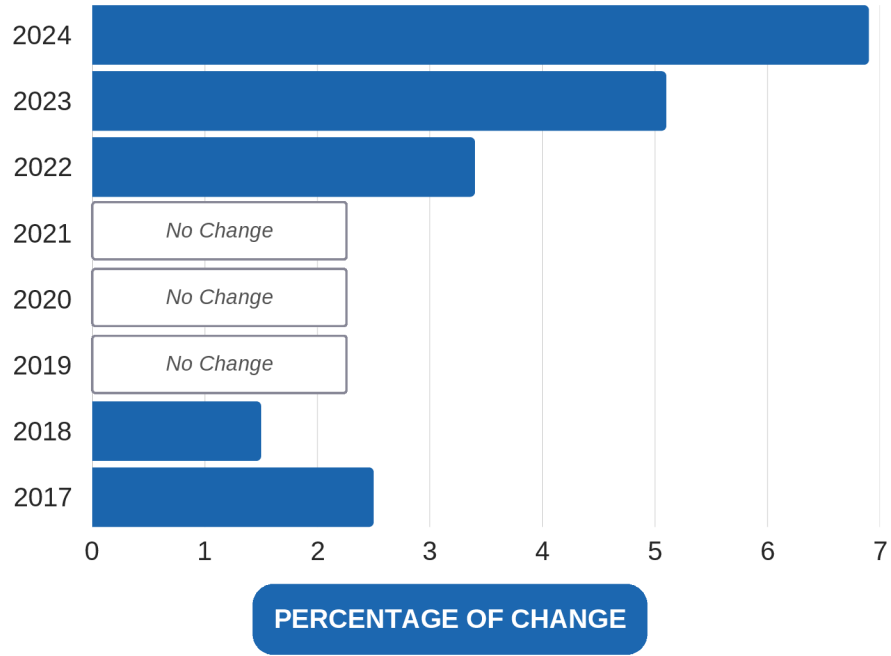


2024 WACO DISBURSEMENT



HISTORICAL COUNTY ASSESSMENTS

**STARTING IN 2022, COUNTY ASSESSMENT CHANGES BEGAN TO BE INFORMED BY SEATTLE CPI.*



SCHOLARSHIP

The Washington Association of County Officials was honored to award three outstanding and hardworking students with scholarships from the Washington Counties Scholarship Fund.

"Once again we had many outstanding applicants, all worthy of scholarship support." said Washington Association of County Officials Executive Director Jennifer Wallace, "WACO is proud to support the bright futures of these high achieving students and will work toward continued and even expanded support in the years to come."

We are pleased to announce that there were several VERY qualified applicants, however the committee was able to select three outstanding individuals for this year's awards.



KAITLYN POLHEMUS

Kaitlyn Polhemus is a Cedarcrest High School graduate and will be attending the University of California Davis in the fall to major in animal science. Kaitlyn's parent Kristine Jacobs works for the Snohomish County Prosecutor's office.



LEAH STANGOHR

Leah Stangoehr is a Meadowdale High School graduate and will be attending the University of Seattle as a biology major with plans to pursue medicine. Leah's parent Richard Stangoehr works in the Snohomish County Assessor's office.



SOFIA SPENCER

Sofia Spencer is a Stevenson High School graduate. Sofia plans on attending Willamette University. Sofia's parent is Skamania County Assessor Gabe Spencer.



Washington Association
of **COUNTY OFFICIALS**

MORE ABOUT US

The membership of the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) includes elected county assessors, auditors, clerks, coroners and medical examiners, prosecuting attorneys, sheriffs, treasurers and comparable appointed officials in charter counties.

WACO is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization. WACO works closely with the affiliate organizations for every executive level county official in Washington's 39 counties. These affiliate associations meet throughout the year, bringing colleagues together to discuss issues of common interest and to exchange ideas and opinions.



Email: info@countyofficials.org



Phone: 360-753-7319



Website: www.countyofficials.org



Address: 206 10th Avenue SE Olympia, WA 98501

