

City of Renton 2010 State Legislative Agenda and Statement of Policy Positions

The City of Renton's 2010 State Legislative Agenda and Statement of Policy Positions are divided as follows:

1. The **2010 State Legislative Agenda includes MAJOR ISSUES** – includes the items Renton will devote its highest level of advocacy toward achieving in 2010. *These are outlined in a separate handout.*
2. The **2010 Statement of Policy Positions – SUPPORT/OPPOSE** – includes items Renton considers important. The City will use time and effort and join others in supporting beneficial measures or opposing those which would have an adverse impact.
3. The **2010 Statement of Policy Positions – TRACK/MONITOR** – includes issues the City will track and monitor. As these issues evolve, the City may involve itself to a greater degree if necessary.

City of Renton 2010 Statement of Policy Positions

Criminal Justice/Courts/Jails/Law Enforcement

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Protect criminal justice, law enforcement, and courts funding:** Renton will work closely with other local agencies, law enforcement organizations, and courts organizations to protect operating budget funding for key criminal justice, law enforcement, and courts priorities. These include municipal criminal justice, auto theft prevention, law enforcement academy funding, and court interpreters.
- **Law Enforcement Academies:** Renton will join other law enforcement agencies in opposing legislation that would unnecessarily undermine the current model of law enforcement academy funding and training.
- **Protecting privacy of rank-and-file police officers:** Renton will support legislation to better ensure this, if it is proposed.
- **Increased court fees for deferred prosecution and establishment of court fees for the costs of DNA evidence swabs:** Renton will support efforts by the District and Municipal Court Judges Association (DMCJA) to increase current court fees assessed against offenders for deferred prosecution costs. The City will also support a DMCJA effort to establish a new fee to better cover the cost of required DNA evidence swabs that must be taken in certain criminal cases.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Gangs prevention funding:** Renton will track efforts to enhance funding for gang intervention – specifically any efforts to add funding for prevention.
- **Funding for medical costs incurred by jail offenders:** Renton will support efforts by AWC and others to obtain assistance through state funding.
- **Schools mapping:** Renton will track efforts by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to obtain additional state funding for the mapping of K-12 schools and higher education institutions for emergency preparedness purposes.
- **Requiring Municipal Courts to take on Anti-Harassment Orders (AHOs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs):** If legislation arises to turn this local-discretion authority into a requirement for Municipal Courts, Renton will track it.
- **Weapons restrictions:** Renton will track efforts to enact state restrictions on guns, including safe storage and “closing the gun show loophole.”
- **Extending 9-1-1 taxes to “Voice Over Internet Protocol” providers:** Renton will track this legislation expected to be promoted by law enforcement and regional dispatch providers and oppose shifts to other state funding needs.

Economic Development/Infrastructure

SUPPORT/MONITOR

- **Farmers Markets and Wine Tasting:** Renton helps support one of the strongest Farmers Markets in the State, with approximately 4,000 people visiting Downtown Renton every Tuesday between June-September. The City supports continued state funding for the statewide Farmers Market network. Additionally, although not currently allowed by City code, Renton supports legislation to permit controlled wine tasting by Washington State wine vendors during Farmers Markets.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Legislation to authorize the formation of “Community Facilities Districts”:** If this legislative effort arises in 2010, as it did in 2009, Renton will track the issue.

Fire Prevention and Emergency Services/HazMat

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Permit incentives for homeowners who voluntarily install fire-suppression sprinkler systems in their residences:** The City supports the efforts of the Washington Fire Chiefs Association related to HB 2224, legislation introduced in 2009 to address barriers that prevent the voluntary installation of fire suppression sprinkler systems in private residences by promoting education regarding the effectiveness of residential fire sprinklers. This proposal also provides financial and regulatory incentives to homeowners, builders and water purveyors for voluntary installation of the systems.
- **Providing cities served by fire districts the same authority to impose fire facility impact fees as cities with their own fire departments already have:** This legislative initiative, HB 1080, progressed quite a ways through the process in 2009 but did not pass. Fire Chiefs are expected to promote this legislation again in 2010, and Renton will strongly support it.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Funding to create regional Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) Materials Handling and Response Centers:** Securing funding for regionally-focused “CBRNE” efforts is a high priority of the Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs. Renton will support this legislative effort.
- **Code enforcement authority for Fire Districts:** Renton provides support for areas covered by Fire Districts, and thus would be poised to support a legislative effort to give Districts authority to enforce code in its Potential Annexation Areas.
- **Clarifying regional fire authority statutory language:** If there is legislation to clarify where the Regional Fire Authorities can apply fire-benefit charges, Renton will monitor it closely. The City is exploring whether a Regional Fire Authority makes long-term sense.

- **Simply Majority for EMS Levies:** Fire Chiefs are expected to bring forth 2010 legislation that would allow Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levies to achieve voter approval with a 50 percent plus one majority, vs. the current 60 percent. Renton will track this issue.

Fiscal Issues

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Oppose unfunded mandates, legislation that erodes local authority, and/or legislation that erodes local tax revenue:** This is an annual staple of the City's legislative agenda and directly relates to "basic premises" upon which the annual Legislative Agenda is built.
- **Preserve Operating and Capital Budget funding for cities and local governments:** While the state's Operating and Capital budgets do not impact cities and local governments as directly as they do schools, Renton will nonetheless join with AWC and others in working to hold intact funding for programs where the state partners with cities and local governments. This includes everything from the Public Works Trust Fund to Streamlined Sales Tax mitigation funding to Shoreline Management Program grants to Model Toxics Control Act grants.
- **Restrict business license authority:** The Washington State Retailers Association is expected to advance 2010 legislation to restrict cities' authority to impose business license fees. Renton will join AWC and others in opposing this local pre-emption effort.
- **Oppose countywide utility tax authority and support unincorporated area utility tax:** If King County or the Washington State Association of Counties promotes legislation to establish countywide utility taxing authority, Renton will join numerous other municipalities and the AWC in opposition. A countywide utility tax would result in a "double tax" on city residents who already pay this tax to Renton. However, the city will support a legislative initiative to establish unincorporated area utility tax authority for counties.
- **Permanent revenue stream for "4Culture":** Renton is working hard to foster a thriving arts and culture community and will support legislation to ensure a permanent, ongoing revenue stream for King County's "4Culture" Public Development Authority. The City supports the position of 4Culture and the Washington State Arts Alliance that investment in the arts is an investment in education and helps foster community and economic development. A base of strong arts and culture creates vibrant communities that connect people across cultural boundaries, attract tourism, and support and enhance business retention and recruitment.

Environmental Issues

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Puget Sound Partnership – "Partner" designation and applying it to grant and loan program scoring:** Renton supports the initiative to clean up and restore the Puget Sound, and the idea of a "Partner" designation for cities that do an outstanding job of implementing the Puget Sound Action Agenda. However, while details surrounding the "Partner" designation are still being worked out, Renton is wary of having state agencies move too quickly in establishing grant and loan program scoring preferences related to whether a jurisdiction has achieved "Partner" status or not.

- **Puget Sound Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan:** The City will support the establishment of a dedicated funding source to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan.
- **Puget Sound Partnership, climate change, and green buildings:** Renton will closely monitor initiatives for early-action funding, infrastructure funding, and tax incentives involving environmental issues such as Puget Sound cleanup and restoration, compact development and transit-oriented development in urban centers, “Green Building,” and reduction of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). The City will be concerned about any potential transfer of funding sources for existing programs in order to fund these efforts. Additionally, the City will want to ensure that local jurisdictions are not handed unfunded or “under-funded” mandates to carry out these initiatives.

Water/Stormwater

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Funding for stormwater program implementation:** Through new Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements for controlling stormwater, local government will be dealing with significantly increased responsibilities and costs in terms of stormwater management. During the 2009 Session, ESHB 1614, legislation to provide a new revenue source for stormwater management, passed out of the House but ‘died’ in the Senate. Renton will strongly support efforts to adequately fund this area of infrastructure investment.
- **Potential reworking of 2003 Municipal Water Law:** With a constitutional lawsuit pending against the 2003 Municipal Water Law, it is possible that lawmakers may seek a legislative fix to this issue in 2009. Renton would strongly oppose any modification to the law in terms of perfecting water rights and flexible “place of use” for delivering water. These are key pillars within the law for Renton.

Growth Management/Housing/Annexation/Land Use and Permitting

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Transit-Oriented Development – oppose “mandate-driven” – support incentivizing:** In 2009, Renton joined AWC and many individual cities in opposing legislation (SHB 1490) that would have mandated local jurisdictions to require a 50 units-per-acre level of density around transit stations. The City will join many others in pushing for *incentives*, not *mandates*, as a way of encouraging “transit-oriented development” projects and density around transit stations.
- **Allowing code changes and other actions growing out of “Subarea Plans” to be exempted from the “not more than once-per-year” GMA Plan updates:** Currently, Subarea Plans are exempted from the “not more than once per year” restriction on changing GMA plans, but the actions growing out of those Subarea Plans are not. The American Planning Association will be working on a legislative fix to this, and Renton will support this.
- **Affordable housing:** Renton will support initiatives to: a) preserve current funding levels for the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in 2010 and restore previous funding levels for the HTF as the State’s economic picture improves, particularly given the HTF as a likely revenue source for the Sunset Terrace housing project the City is strongly supporting; b) provide tax credits to large employers that financially assist their employees with housing rental or purchase costs.

- **Civil Warrant Authority:** Renton will support efforts led by other individual cities to provide civil warrant authority to local jurisdictions to enter and inspect rental properties that appear to be unsafe or sub-standard.
- **Requiring consistent development standards in PAAs or UGAs:** The AWC may promote legislation in 2010 to require that counties have development standards in Potential Annexation Areas or Urban Growth Areas that are consistent with those in place for neighboring cities. Absent the more direct legislation, an initiative may also require that counties engage in a higher level of joint planning with respect to these areas. Renton will support either or both of these legislative initiatives.
- **Annexation tools:** Renton will support legislation to make “island annexations” less cumbersome.
- **Making GMA update cycles more consistent with federal Census updates:** Current law requires that GMA comprehensive plans be updated at least once every seven years. The updates are dependent on accurate population and Census data – and yet Census numbers are updated only once every 10 years. Planning Directors, AWC, and others may advance 2010 legislation to better “harmonize” the timing of these and other required updates. If such legislation is advanced, Renton will support it.
- **Local zoning control over location of mini-casinos:** Renton will support legislation to explicitly clarify cities’ authority to zone the location of mini-casinos, to grandfather in mini-casinos brought into a city through annexation, and to grandfather in existing zoning restrictions.
- **Increased local discretion to determine what constitutes the use of “Best Available Science” and how to define “Best Available Science” (BAS):** There have been a number of legislative efforts in past years to provide local government agencies with more authority over the use of, and the definition of, “BAS.” Renton supports legislation that provides a “Safe Harbor” to jurisdictions that follow all the proper steps of utilizing BAS.

Human and Social Services

SUPPORT/OPOSE

- **Full funding of “2-1-1” system:** Renton will support continued efforts to obtain state funds to help fully fund the new 2-1-1 emergency communications system to help seniors, the disabled, and vulnerable populations within Washington State access social services.
- **Public health funding:** Renton will support efforts to preserve funding for Seattle-King County Public Health. A strong public health system improves health status through the promotion of health, the prevention of and protection from injury and disease.
- **Energy assistance for low-income residents:** During economic down times, the demand for low-income energy assistance rises dramatically. Renton will support state partnership funding for energy assistance for low-income residents.
- **Employment-Based English as a Second Language/English Language Learners (ESL/ELL) Training:** Many employers who are faced with a high rate of job vacancies due to a lack of skilled employees are finding it necessary to consider alternative ways of training

existing employees to take on more advanced responsibilities. Employment-Based ESL/ELL training helps workers overcome barriers such as transportation and child care and can lead an immigrant or refugee to English proficiency quicker when using work-based materials. Having employment based ESL/ELL for low-wage working immigrants and refugees can open up new career opportunities that lead them to higher wage employment. Renton has appreciated the Legislature's recent funding of Renton Technical College's ESL/ELL workplace-based programs and joins the Renton Chamber of Commerce in seeking ongoing and sustainable state funding for workplace-based ESL/ELL programs.

LEOFF/PERS/Employee Services Issues

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **LEOFF 2 enhancement:** In 2010, if there are efforts to enhance LEOFF 2 system benefits and thus impact cities' costs, Renton will track this and work through AWC.
- **"Presumptive disease" for firefighters:** Existing state law provides workers' compensation benefits for firefighters, and families of firefighters, if their disease is presumed to have occurred as a result of the inherently dangerous conditions they faced during their terms of employment. This is defined narrowly within state law. If 2010 legislative initiatives are brought forward to expand the reach of 'presumptive disease' laws, it will present cost impacts and concerns for Renton. The City will work through AWC in this area.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **LEOFF 1 retirees:** Renton has some 98 retired LEOFF 1 employees, and 11 active employees who are eligible for the LEOFF 1 retirement program. Like many other cities, Renton continues to seek State assistance in addressing the medical costs for LEOFF 1. Renton will work through AWC in this area.

General Government

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Protecting bidding laws and contracting authority:** Renton will join other local governments in working to protect local government authority in contracting and bidding laws in 2009.
- **Utility liens:** Current law provides that for multi-family dwellings, if utility payments are not made, local utilities have the authority to place a lien against the landlord for the multi-family units. This is efficient in that it involves one action by a local utility. Lobbying organizations representing landlords have typically requested the Legislature change this law and have the liens placed on individual tenants. This requires multiple actions by utilities and involves chasing tenants who may be moving out of area or out of state. Renton will join other utilities in opposing this change to utility lien law if it is advanced.
- **Shifting liability to municipal utilities under the "Call Before You Dig" law:** In 2009, underground contractors sought to add a new definition to the "Call Before You Dig" area of state law, one which would have shifted liability and costs to municipal utilities. An interim work group has been formed, and 2010 legislation is possible. If underground contractors go the same route as they did in 2009, Renton will join AWC and municipal utilities in opposing such a legislative initiative.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Requiring that all executive sessions be tape-recorded:** There may be a 2010 effort to re-introduce a measure to require taping of local executive sessions – at least under certain conditions. Renton will track this issue.
- **Public records request:** The AWC and other public-agency associations may bring to the 2010 Legislature a package of ideas on public records, including an initiative to help local jurisdictions better offset the growing cost of providing these records. Renton will track this issue.
- **Expansion of wrongful death and injury claims:** Legislation to expand wrongful death and injury claims against local agencies and the private sector narrowly failed in 2008 and the issue may be introduced in 2010. Renton will monitor this issue closely.

Parks and Recreation

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Support the Washington Recreation & Park Association's (WRPA) development of a "Healthy & Sustainable Communities Initiative":** The City supports the WRPA's efforts to address the significant challenges facing our state which are illustrated most specifically by the alarming increase in health risks such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. WRPA is working to help address these challenges through prevention and wellness programs as well as infrastructure investments such as parks and sidewalks. WRPA intends to bring specific funding requests to the 2011 Legislature in cooperation with multiple stakeholders.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Protect the funding level for the Washington Wildlife, Recreation and Parks (WWRP) Program:** In the 2009-11 Capital Budget, the Legislature appropriated \$70 million in funding for the WWRP. Keeping the \$70 million funding level intact is a key priority for parks officials.
- **Authority to trap moles and rodents on public property:** Renton will support 2010 legislation, if it is advanced, to provide cities and counties with explicit authority to trap rodents such as gophers and moles that can cause major damage to public property if left unchecked.
- **"Dark Skies" legislation:** In prior years, parks officials have successfully headed off measures promoted by astronomers to require ball field lighting to be turned off at a certain hour. This is a local-control issue that cities and counties work out with area neighborhoods. Renton will join others in opposing any "Dark Skies" initiative that may emerge in 2010.

Telecommunications

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Oppose statewide franchise fee authority:** In 2009, Verizon approached the Legislature, seeking enactment of a statewide franchising structure for cable and video services. Had the legislation succeeded, it would have pre-empted local franchising authority that guides cable service in Renton and other local markets around the state. If proposed, Renton will join AWC in strongly opposing this attack on local control.

Transportation/Transit

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **SR 520 Tolling:** The City will be monitoring the development of financing plans for State Route 520. While Renton supports moving forward with a replacement of the 520 bridge across Lake Washington, the City will monitor closely any potential impacts from traffic diversion from Interstate 90 or Highway 520 to Interstate 405 and City arterials. The City would like to reserve the right to seek possible mitigation funds in the future.
- **Street Utility:** In 2010, the AWC and a number of individual jurisdictions will seek to obtain legislative authorization to allow cities to establish “Street Utilities” for local maintenance and preservation needs. Renton will support this effort.

TRACK/MONITOR

- **Legislation to fine-tune the “Transportation Benefit District” statute:** Renton will track this legislative initiative likely to be brought forward by AWC and individual cities.

Education

SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- The City recognizes that its success increasingly depends on an educated and flexible workforce for all of its employers, public and private alike. Employers need well educated and highly skilled employees to grow and thrive. Because all students must be prepared to enter the globally competitive workforce, the City supports efforts to adequately fund education reform. The State’s investment should:
 - Further strengthen accountability -- measurable performance should be ensured at all levels of education.
 - Attract and retain quality teachers and address the shortage of educators in the fields of mathematics, science, special education, early learning, and bilingual studies.
 - Create a more competitive workforce by expanding funding for FTE enrollment at all levels of higher education and prioritizing offerings toward jobs and industries of the future and high-demand fields.
 - Encourage stronger coordination of workforce development between K-12 and post-secondary education entities and base targets on employer and economic demands.
- The City supports fulfillment of the state’s “paramount duty” to fully fund basic education costs including transportation, building and utility costs, and a full six-period high school day so students can meet graduation requirements within four years.