

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Media Contacts**

[Laura Pettitt](#) | Communications and Engagement Director, City of Renton

[Brian Parry](#) | Communications Director, AWC

***MAYOR PAVONE JOINS COLLABORATIVE ELECTED LEADERS INSTITUTE***

***Inaugural Association of Washington Cities CELI program enhances collaborative leadership and governing for 50+ Washington State elected officials***

**RENTON, WA (JULY 31, 2024)**—Nearly 50 elected officials from cities across Washington met in Spokane on July 26 and 27 to kick off the inaugural cohort of the [Washington Collaborative Elected Leaders Institute](#) (WA-CELI), an immersive training program designed to enhance local elected officials' skills in collaborative leadership and governing across differences. The WA-CELI pilot program is offered by the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Center for Quality Communities in partnership with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (a joint effort of Washington State University and the University of Washington) and the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Policy & Governance. Over the next several months, participants will receive intensive training in collaborative leadership skills and work to break down political polarization, tackle community challenges, and build bridges with cities and towns across the state. Of the program, Mayor Pavone said, "In this day and age, one of the realities of government is that issues don't stop at city limits. We are far more effective at solving problems when we work together and consider contributing factors from a holistic perspective. I'm proud of the relationships we've developed with our neighboring cities and elected officials on every level of government, and our commitment to collaboration is again cemented with our participation in this first cohort of CELI. I look forward to seeing the future relationships born of this new program from AWC."



"Elected officials from towns as small as Entiat and cities as large as Tacoma applied to participate in the inaugural cohort because they want to be part of the solution to our civic health crisis," said Deanna Dawson, CEO of the Association of Washington Cities. "Through WA-CELI, these local leaders are developing the skills, knowledge, and relationships needed to improve civic health of Washington state."

"The Ruckelshaus Center is excited to partner on this program to build the civic health of our state. Participants will explore diverse strategies to navigate differing perspectives and foster collaboration to address complex policy issues within our cities and towns and achieve tangible outcomes for their constituents," said Director Julia Carboni. "Beyond the invaluable training they will receive, participants will also gain insights into the unique challenges confronting communities across the state and forge meaningful connections with other elected leaders."

"Washington's two premier public universities are partnering with the Association of Washington Cities to enable elected officials to practice a fundamental element in democratic decision-making: disagreeing without being disagreeable," said Jodi Sandfort, Dean of UW's Evans School. "The issues of the day require serious and civil debates, and we are pleased that so many elected city officials want to build their capacity in this important practice."

WA-CELI will host sessions in locations around the state, with a final capstone wrapping up the training at the 2025 AWC Annual Conference.

Under the guidance of expert facilitators, teams will learn and practice a broad range of collaborative leadership skills, including:

- Examining how to move from hierarchical to collaborative leadership
- Managing collaborative dynamics and embracing conflict as a tool for change
- Framing discussions around interests instead of positions
- Exploring ways to engage the public and communicate compromises
- Discovering strategies for evaluating collaborative processes and outcomes
- Learning how to maintain collaborative relationships over time

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### **About City of Renton**

*The City of Renton, Washington, with a population of 108,800 (2024), is located on the southeast shore of Lake Washington, just south of Seattle. Renton's strong economic base, diverse marketplace, and favorable business climate have attracted nationally recognized companies wishing to provide employees and their families with an outstanding quality of life. Renton is the home of Boeing, PACCAR, IKEA, Super Bowl Champion (2014) Seattle Seahawks, two-time (2016 & 2019) MLS champion and CONCACAF Champion (2022) Seattle Sounders FC (in 2024), and the eternal resting place of rock icon Jimi Hendrix. You can find more information on our [website](#), [news releases](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Nextdoor](#) pages.*

### **About the Association of Washington Cities**

*The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan corporation that builds connections between Washington's diverse cities and towns while providing members with the support needed to thrive through delivery of data-driven education, nationally recognized pooling programs, and nonpartisan advocacy.*

### **About AWC Center of Quality Communities**

*The AWC Center for Quality Communities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization associated with the Association of Washington Cities. The Center promotes municipal leadership development and civic engagement in pursuit of building healthy, resilient, strong communities.*