



June 10, 2020  
SCA PIC Meeting

**Item 7:**  
**COVID-19 Legislative Priorities**  
***ACTION***

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**SCA Staff Contact**

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**Potential Action**

To recommend the SCA Board of Directors adopt the following legislative priorities related to COVID-19 response and relief in advance of a potential special session of the Washington State Legislature in 2020:

**As the Legislature considers necessary actions to address the impacts of COVID-19 on our state, SCA asks that priority be given to support for cities and towns in the following areas:**

**Financial support**

- o Maintain critical state shared revenues that provide funding for essential public services.
- o Provide fiscal relief to cities hard hit with costs for emergency response and loss of tax revenue.

**Fiscal flexibility**

- o Provide flexibility within existing restricted revenues to allow cities to use funds where they are most needed right now.

**Regulatory relief**

- o Continue the emergency action taken by the Governor to provide flexibility on deadlines for permitting and land use timelines. Cities hard hit by this emergency may still be experiencing staffing shortages and back-logs that will impact their ability to comply with typical statutory deadlines.

**City-owned utility support**

- o Allow city-owned utilities that have waived late fees and shut-offs and extension of their ability to collect outstanding debt so that they can work with rate payers to extend payment plans without impacting the financial viability of the utility or raising rates on other customers.
- o Provide funding to help offset losses related to forgiving late fees and delinquent accounts for those customers hard-hit by the emergency.

**Economic stimulus**

- o Investing in public infrastructure projects is one of the best ways to support economic stimulus as infrastructure investments have a positive economic multiplier with the creation of family-wage jobs and support increased economic activity.

***Cities also support efforts to help the most vulnerable residents and our small businesses***  
**o Cities support programs to provide emergency rental assistance and emergency housing.**  
**o Cities support programs to provide emergency assistance to small businesses.**

### **Background**

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and economic impacts, the Governor and members of the Washington State Legislature have suggested a special legislative session may be called as early as June 2020. A recent [report](#) in the Seattle Times highlighted early estimates that show Washington State could lose \$7 billion in projected revenue between now and 2023, which may lead to a round of budget cuts in the summer followed by more substantial budget adjustments when the next regular session begins in January 2021.

In preparation for the potential of a special session, the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) developed [legislative priorities](#) related to COVID-19 response and relief. These priorities ask the state to support cities through a variety of means, including: providing fiscal support; investing in local infrastructure to support economic activity; providing relief from state-mandated regulatory timelines; and, supporting city-owned utilities.

At the May 13 PIC meeting, members discussed the priorities identified by AWC and approved a motion to bring a policy position to the next PIC meeting recommending SCA support the same priorities.

If a special session is called, it is anticipated that action would be taken swiftly. Because of this, it is especially important for cities to communicate with their legislators in advance about the important role cities play in responding to emergencies and to economic recovery. Cities should also communicate with their legislators about the fiscal impact that the COVID-19 crisis has had on their cities.

### **Next Steps**

If recommended by PIC, the legislative priorities will be brought to the SCA Board for final adoption.

Questions may be directed to SCA Policy Director Brian Parry [brian@soundcities.org](mailto:brian@soundcities.org) or 206-499-4159.