

SSCCLC 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The South Sound Chambers of Commerce Legislative Coalition (SSCCLS) continues to focus on Economic Vitality and Growth for the South Sound region. There is a need for continued transportation infrastructure investments and investment in human beings (education, workforce development, attainable housing and homelessness) as keys to our state and region's economic success. Our businesses are still reeling either from the pandemic shutdowns, global supply chain and labor shortages, and continued increases in costs for goods and supplies. The solution for these problems, once again, is not demands for more taxes and fees or regulatory burdens. We insist our representatives in the Legislature focus on creating policies to encourage job creation, develop our workforce and reduce costs for businesses and citizens who are struggling to make ends meet. Below are the key issues that our member Chambers believe are imperative for the region:

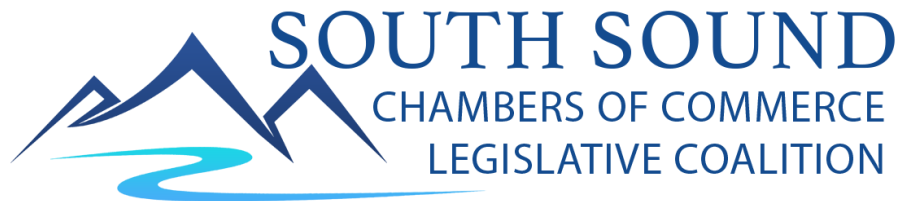
Transportation: Transportation infrastructure continues as a key economic development priority for the South Sound region. South Sound projects underway must continue to receive funding to ensure their on-time delivery, including the Puget Sound Gateway projects as they are a key to economic development and revitalization in the South Sound region – a region that contains significant warehousing and distribution in addition to an airport, two ports and access to major highways throughout the state. We also call on lawmakers to continue to fund shortfalls in the Puget Sound Gateway projects, particularly as our state moves away from gasoline powered vehicles which will impact gas tax revenues. The Legislature must continue to fund necessary regional and local transportation projects as a means to create jobs, relieve congestion to enhance commerce, and prepare for future growth.

Budget and Taxes: The Legislature has passed significant spending budgets in addition to a new capital gains tax increase set to go into effect. This has businesses nervous about the impact that might occur in the event of an economic downturn. This year the Legislature must reassess budget priorities to avoid the need for tax increases. Spending should focus on activities that increase job opportunities for our state's citizens, public health and other necessary supports. Washington needs to remain competitive for business attraction and retention and legislative decisions must work toward that goal.

Support Small Business: The key to economic development in the South Sound is to ensure a strong business structure – including small businesses who are people not only creating jobs for themselves but jobs for others. The Legislature must support these local job creators by actively reducing unnecessary regulations and avoiding new tax burdens. Policies to support local businesses and their employees include:

- **Do not impose additional regulatory requirements or standards on independent contractors.** These are the people who are working to create their own business due

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to recent tech-sector layoffs and scarcity of attainable housing near existing job openings. Businesses who use independent contractors are often other small businesses. Now is not the time to revolutionize employment law.

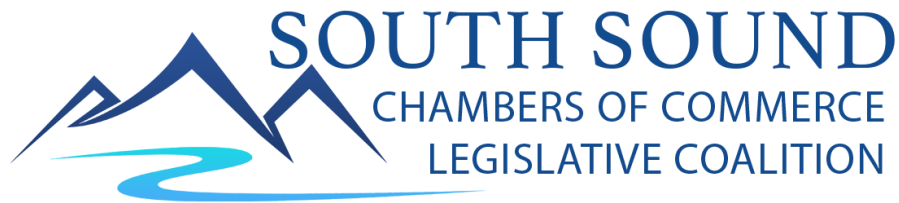
- **Remove the mandate for long term care insurance:** Our employees are struggling in this economy and a mandate to reduce their paychecks for long term care insurance they may not ever use OR may not be sufficient for their needs OR they cannot afford the cost. In addition, this mandate has driven other options out of our state's insurance market place. The state's Long Term Care Act needs to be either repealed or turned into a voluntary program.
- **Avoid all increases to employment related costs.** We need all of our businesses, but particularly our small businesses, to be holding onto the employees they have and INCREASING their employees now and into the future. The state must make adjustments to laws in order to keep employment costs steady and predictable.

Ensure Continued Investments in Workers/Education: The state made significant investments in our human infrastructure to help with pandemic recovery. Now, with pervasive workforce shortages the Legislature must ensure the right investments are made in education and training, including on the job training opportunities. Multiple pathways should be available for individuals looking to get into all trades and professions. A trained workforce must be available for our economy to be successful.

- **K-12 Education:** K-12 funding should remain steady and assist schools with transitions between remote and in person learning throughout emergency interruptions in instruction. Students should be supported in all learning methodologies available to them. School districts should be given flexibility with their levies to ensure they can fill funding gaps as necessary based on the needs of their students. The SSCCLC also sees a need to provide appropriate secondary transition instruction and planning for developmentally disabled (DD) students ages 18-21 to ensure they can be independent and employable. We support legislative changes proposed by the DD community to ensure proper funding and accountability.
- **Career and Technical Education/Workforce Education:** The Legislature should ensure that adequate education dollars continue going to CTE programs and that all students/displaced adults have access to relevant CTE courses and workforce development programs.
- **Higher Education:** Education pathways that facilitate economic growth (including certificate programs, licensing and apprenticeship programs, and Associate and Bachelor's degrees) have a high value for the South Sound region. These programs, and pathways needed to complete these programs, should be a funding priority for the supplemental budget.

Housing Attainability – The SSCCLC supports policy proposals and commits to work in partnership with Legislators and stakeholders to ensure housing is attainable for ALL economic segments of the population in the South Sound region. This is important to attracting and retaining businesses and the workforce for those businesses. Supported proposals include:

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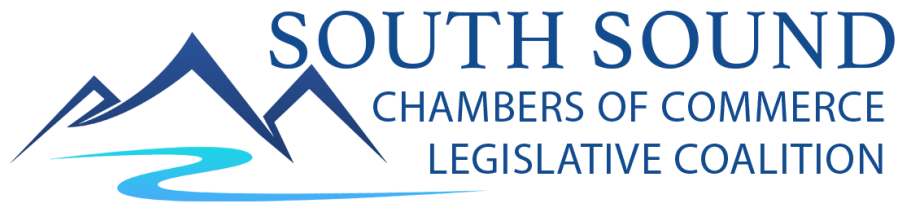
- **Amendments to housing and land use regulations:** The state Growth Management Act should be amended to help eliminate the current housing supply deficit, and to accommodate the future market demand for housing. Additionally, the Legislature should create financial and legal incentives to achieve housing goals.
- **Transit Oriented Development (TOD):** Comprehensive plans under the Growth Management Act should be amended to accommodate 50-years of population growth instead of the current 20-year growth planning period.
- **Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE):** The Legislature should provide flexibility and incentives for cities to participate in the MFTE and extend the MFTE to 20-years rather than the current 8-12 years.
- Establish smaller lot and/or smaller unit size products to increase affordable ownership opportunities consistent with the *look and feel* of the neighborhood:
 - Prioritize opportunities to buy a home, especially for first-time buyers
 - Good design gains community acceptance; bad design kills it
 - Increase density where it makes sense
 - Protect historic neighborhoods and unique communities
 - Simplify permitting
 - Cities - with assistance and funding from the Department of Commerce - should create a catalog of permit ready housing designs, particularly for new housing on small lots”

Energy and Climate Change -- As utilities continue to face a transformational change in their industry, responding to evolving customer expectations and rapidly changing technological advancements, policy makers need to ensure utilities can be nimbler in a rapidly changing marketplace. Utilities must be responsive to market changes, as well as customer desire for real-time adoption of emerging technologies that allow for greater control over energy choices, cleaner and greener power – all while maintaining an affordable low cost. Policies encouraging the use of performance and incentive-based regulation, along with appropriate glide paths and compliance tools - to aid in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on the electric grid - must be advanced to allow for the transformational changes in the utility sector.

- Transmission siting & permitting – as the state works to bring more renewable energy online, several new transmission lines are needed. Legislation to help expedite the siting permitting of these lines are a priority.
- In order to keep housing and utility costs affordable, avoid policies that reduce fuel choice and instead focus on consumer education, appliance efficiency and new technologies.

Public Safety -- **Public** safety is an important part of community vitality and economic growth. Our businesses, employees and customers must feel safe. In addition, retail theft issues – which have been increasing – do not just result in increased prices, labor shortages and store closings. they also make our citizens less safe, decrease access to necessary products and increase food and other

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product prices which hurts all South Sound citizens, particularly those with fixed or low incomes. We urge the Legislature to immediately work on solutions that do the following:

- Provide clarity around vehicle pursuits to eliminate confusion
- Improve and increase public safety funding
- Help retailers and their employees with policies that give them tools to make their stores safer.
- Ensure that organized retail crime rings do not have access to sell stolen products through online sources

Health Care – An operational hospital care system is a key to any community and the South Sound is no exception. The SSCCLC supports policies and funding that will help hospitals increase their workforces and improve their ability to effectively treat the citizens of our region.

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