

# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS



PUYALLUP SUMNER CHAMBER of COMMERCE

The Puyallup/Sumner Chamber of Commerce is a champion of business, advocating to ensure a thriving business community in Puyallup, Sumner and East Pierce County.

## Legislative Priorities 2022

### 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 fund all remaining shortfalls in the Puget Sound Gateway projects. 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.

#### *Related bills:*

HB 1603: Transportation/general fund  
HB 1604: Motor vehicle sales tax  
SB 5705/HB 1990: SR 167 & I-405 tax deferral

### Budget and Taxes

The Legislature passed a budget last year that included a new capital gains tax increase in addition to spending billions more than the previous budget. This year the Legislature must reassess budget priorities to avoid the need for tax increases and should examine spending to ensure the additional monies spent last year are working towards increasing job opportunities for our state's citizens. Our economy is growing but that growth is perilous and could turn at any time. Washington needs to remain competitive for business attraction and retention and legislative decisions must work toward that goal.

#### *Related bills:*

HB 1912/SB 5696: Capital gains tax/repeal

### Support Small Businesses

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 to job scarcity and the businesses who use them are often other small businesses struggling to keep their doors open. Now is not the time to revolutionize employment law.

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- Continue to reduce the burden of COVID-19 layoffs on our unemployment insurance system. Additional reductions in rate increases for 2023 are important for continued job growth in our area. The Legislature must reassess where the UI trust fund is and provide funds to ensure businesses are not going to see large rate increase in 2023. The Legislature should also resist all proposals to increase UI benefits until the trust fund is healthy again.
- 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 is not something they can afford at this point in time. In addition, this mandate has driven other options out of our state's marketplace. 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 new overtime regulations and other laws to keep employment costs steady until business is back to normal hiring levels.

*Related bills:*

HB 1913: Repealing and replacing the long-term care trust and payroll tax  
HB 1595: Repealing the long-term care trust act and payroll tax

## **Ensure Continued Investments in Workers/Education**

Last session, the state made significant investments in our human infrastructure to help with pandemic recovery. With the pandemic continuing, and with much of these investments coming from federal dollars, Legislature must carefully monitor these programs to help ensure investment in education and training is able to continue. 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 the pandemic emergency. 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 Bachelors 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.

*Related bills:*

HB 1536: Regional apprenticeship programs

*Continued*

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## 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 nimble 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.

### *Related bills:*

HB 1766 (SB 5668): Modifying the regulation of gas companies to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

HB 1767 (SB 5666): Concerning the authority of publicly owned electric utilities to engage in targeted electrification

HB 1770 (SB 5669): Strengthening energy codes

HB 1774 (SB 5722): Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in buildings

## Police Reforms

The intended outcomes of laws HB 1310 and 1054 have been inconsistent across local communities, further clarification and examination is warranted and needed to achieve the intended desire of the new legislation.

### *Related bills:*

HB 1737: Restoring balance and common sense to police reform

HB 1788: Allowing law enforcement to chase suspects

HB 1787: Increasing funding for law enforcement recruitment

HB 1656: Changing the definition of theft to include concealment

HB 1873: Stopping catalytic converter thefts