



Washington State Legislature Refusing to Pay its Fair Share of Election Costs

No one should have to choose between safety and democracy. Cowlitz County shouldn't have to prioritize one over the other but that's what happens every other year. And that's exactly what will happen again in 2020 if the Washington State Legislature continues refusing to pay its fair share of election costs.

Counties conduct elections on behalf of every level of government – from federal presidential elections all the way to local mosquito control districts. Washington State residents should be confident and proud that they have one of the most trustworthy and efficient election systems in the United States, with an excellent reputation for integrity, accuracy, and access.

Achieving this unparalleled election system comes with a high cost for County Auditors and taxpayers. It's expensive to modernize and maintain election registration and ballot-counting systems. It's expensive to provide the highest possible election security. And it's expensive to conduct elections for 4.4 million registered voters across the state.

Same-day voter registration, more ballot drop boxes, and pre-paid postage are important additions to help improve voter access. However, they are costly additions that have been mandated by your state legislators. They are either not funded fully or not funded at all, creating more unfunded mandates to county government who already struggle to meet other obligations in providing public health services, law enforcement, courts, and a myriad of other statutorily and constitutionally required programs and services.

Who should pay? Nearly every ballot in every election contains a mixture of districts, such as state, county, city, schools, etc. Every participating district pays its fair share of the total election cost based on the number of registered voters within its boundary lines. Every participant except for the State of Washington, that is. The State Legislature has decided to "dine and dash" during even years, when the vast majority of their state offices are on the ballot. Despite being given multiple opportunities to do the right thing and change the law, the state instead sticks your cash-strapped county government with the bill.

That's why your county commissioners and elected officials are forced to choose between the public safety you need and a democracy you can trust.

When counties are on the hook to pay the entire cost of conducting the state's elections, it means that valuable resources are diverted from law enforcement and our criminal justice system, public health, and parks. So long as the state fails to pay its fair share of state elections, counties will shoulder the burden of these unfunded mandates. County officials will continue to foot the state's bill while siphoning resources away from public safety and quality of life.

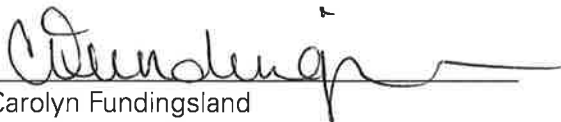
Or will they? Election administrators are readying for 2020, looming as the largest and most contentious election in Washington State's history. Will counties even be able to backfill the state's election costs? Is this a risk you want to take?

Now more than ever, we must support secure, transparent, and accessible elections. Hundreds of county officials – including all 39 independently-elected county auditors and elections directors – asked the State Legislature to pass a Fair Share Election Funding bill (House Bill 1291 and Senate Bill 5073). Instead of stepping up to their responsibility as every school, fire, and park district does, the state of Washington continues to refuse to pay its bills, putting your vote at risk.

Let your voice be heard on this issue and tell your legislators to stop putting our electoral system at risk. As representatives of the Washington State Association of County Auditors and the Washington State Association of Counties, we urge you to call or e-mail your state legislators and tell them it's time to pay their fair share of their own elections. If you don't know how to reach the lawmakers who represent you, call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 or visit www.leg.wa.gov

Signed in support on this 22nd day of April, 2019.

County Auditor
Cowlitz County, Washington


Carolyn Fundingsland

Board of County Commissioners
Cowlitz County, Washington


Joe Gardner


Dennis Weber


Arne Mortensen

FAIR SHARE ELECTION EFFECTS

BY COUNTY

County	State Share 2013 Paid	State Share 2014 Unpaid	State Share 2015 Paid	State Share 2016 Unpaid	Unpaid Share Over 4 Years
Adams	\$6,579	\$22,976	\$25,345	\$42,442	\$65,418
Asotin	\$10,531	\$12,023	\$5,900	\$9,529	\$21,552
Benton	\$79,454	\$111,441	\$54,575	\$278,983	\$390,424
Chelan	\$31,116	\$85,808	\$31,285	\$70,323	\$156,131
Clallam	\$29,964	\$143,059	\$24,104	\$177,431	\$320,490
Clark	\$100,848	\$403,906	\$110,300	\$811,189	\$1,215,095
Columbia	\$522	\$2,775	\$486	\$4,243	\$7,018
Cowlitz	\$37,447	\$96,817	\$32,494	\$330,556	\$427,373
Douglas	\$20,826	\$56,390	\$17,260	\$134,074	\$190,464
Ferry	\$11,075	\$4,318	\$3,024	\$11,591	\$15,909
Franklin	\$45,983	\$147,776	\$105,920	\$267,178	\$414,954
Garfield	\$611	\$2,332	\$3,750	\$6,125	\$8,457
Grant	\$11,595	\$22,968	\$14,122	\$16,481	\$39,449
Grays Harbor	\$17,946	\$53,976	\$17,575	\$118,185	\$172,161
Island	\$35,608	\$99,223	\$25,807	\$273,759	\$372,982
Jefferson	\$11,405	\$29,983	\$11,153	\$70,595	\$100,578
King	\$1,383,589	\$4,266,289	\$990,265	\$4,673,262	\$8,939,551
Kitsap	\$242,840	\$399,601	\$107,218	\$667,967	\$1,067,568
Kittitas	\$15,748	\$38,331	\$10,896	\$36,689	\$75,020
Klickitat	\$7,737	\$29,348	\$12,284	\$47,770	\$77,118
Lewis	\$22,954	\$53,656	\$22,140	\$85,359	\$139,015
Lincoln	\$11,547	\$37,920	\$10,458	\$47,144	\$85,064
Mason	\$29,664	\$98,145	\$35,046	\$137,029	\$235,174
Okanogan	\$25,232	\$33,494	\$12,264	\$53,169	\$86,663
Pacific	\$5,355	\$22,515	\$12,362	\$33,933	\$56,448
Pend Oreille	\$32,003	\$38,206	\$11,595	\$86,100	\$124,306
Pierce	\$297,152	\$910,867	\$206,261	\$1,143,250	\$2,054,117
San Juan	\$8,812	\$39,366	\$11,616	\$76,684	\$116,050
Skagit	\$52,042	\$101,310	\$45,064	\$188,256	\$289,566
Skamania	\$9,275	\$26,085	\$10,130	\$65,219	\$91,304
Snohomish	\$156,751	\$797,192	\$121,402	\$957,442	\$1,754,634
Spokane	\$190,186	\$401,686	\$132,165	\$806,507	\$1,208,193
Stevens	\$67,172	\$69,031	\$28,818	\$106,761	\$175,792
Thurston	\$103,450	\$239,632	\$100,977	\$705,143	\$944,775
Wahkiakum	\$5,311	\$8,487	\$2,648	\$4,934	\$13,421
Walla Walla	\$53,102	\$83,263	\$51,388	\$181,298	\$264,561
Whatcom	\$74,147	\$383,770	\$80,643	\$398,843	\$782,613
Whitman	\$20,651	\$53,720	\$67,176	\$83,180	\$136,900
Yakima	\$167,934	\$313,497	\$131,622	\$466,460	\$779,957
TOTAL	\$3,426,440	\$9,711,845	\$2,685,266	\$13,675,094	\$23,416,265