



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL ON AGING
2021 Legislative Priorities**

The Washington State Council on Aging (WSCoA), a unified voice across Washington, is a unique advocacy group in the arena of senior issues. The WSCoA is charged with advising the Governor, the DSHS Secretary and the State Unit on Aging (RCW 43.20A.695), offering an inside and statewide perspective on matters concerning seniors and people with disabilities.

As the plan for the third decade of this century unfolds, the aging demographic continues its rapid growth. Modest investment today can preserve programs that have immense value. This decade will be critical to the future of our state – a future where older people live more productive lives with a modest amount of help.

During the 2021 Legislative Session the WSCoA will emphasize the following priority issues:

Issue – Proposed budget reductions have the potential of seriously impacting thousands of citizens of our state who depend on Long Term Care services for fundamental functions of life, including adequate housing. The WSCoA strongly advises against reducing funding for Long Term Care services and encourages decision-makers to take a “do no harm” approach to this vulnerable population during biennial budget setting.

Issue – The impact of Social Isolation on the population of older adults needs immediate attention. A great deal has been learned about how to operate supporting systems during a pandemic, but a crisis is building as older adults remain isolated due to concerns about contracting the virus. The previous norm of having in-person access to such activities as medical services, educational facilities, and social/family relationships, to name a few, have been altered. Technology alone can make a difference, but adequate and reliable Broadband Internet available to all citizens throughout our state must be assured. WSCoA encourages the legislature and leadership of the State to continue critical work toward preventing the negative aspects of social isolation.

Ongoing issues -

- ***Support ALTSA request legislation and funding needs*** – Inherent in the work of the WSCoA is remaining attuned to and supporting the important work of ALTSA.
- ***Continue the work of the JLEC*** - The WSCoA has a strong interest in continuing the work of the *Joint Legislative Executive Committee on Planning for Aging and Disability Issues*. As the Age Wave continues to grow the issues this state faces and will continue to face in the future require a dedicated group of thought-leaders paying close attention to the critical matters of the day.
- ***Support the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program*** - Funding is inadequate for this largely volunteer-based and highly effective program. WSCoA supports efforts to extend the reach of this program to more facilities and seniors in need.
- ***Support the work of the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC)*** - Continue the rollout of the Washington State Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias.
- ***Support low-cost housing options focused on Older Adults*** - A growing percentage of the homeless population is made up of seniors. WSCoA recommends added emphasis on the demographics related to seniors who are homeless in our state.