



*Aerial view of the Port of Sunnyside, set against the region's agricultural backdrop.
Feature photos courtesy of the Port of Sunnyside.*

July Updates from WPPA

The past few weeks in the WPPA summer seminar series have felt a bit like a harrowing Hollywood adventure: traversing up and down mountains, skirting fire-scorched landscapes, and whispered conversations in shadowy corners with elected officials. Or as it's otherwise known, the 2026 Commissioners Seminar! Really though, you can include the Directors Seminar in that description, as we had no sooner made it across the Vantage Bridge than WSDOT closed I-90 in both directions on account of diminished visibility from wildfire smoke.

Far from a laughing matter, this is sadly just a matter of fact in WA's summers. With dry forests, minimal snowpack, and drought conditions in port communities around the state, many of our ports and their partners are confronting this reality, and smoky skies in Wenatchee during our Commissioners Seminar last week were just the latest reminder. Notwithstanding conditions, the Commissioners Seminar was a great chance to catch up with our elected leaders and hear updates from interesting industry partners like the Washington State Tree Fruit Association and the Association of Washington Business. We also heard from the Executive Producer of [WA Grown](#), a locally-produced television program that celebrates the huge role agriculture plays in Washington's economy and way of life (and even features port districts from time to time—watch out for Port of Whitman County in Season 14!).

As always, our event featured a tour of the local port, and we are grateful to the Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority for taking the time to show us a snapshot of your myriad projects and facilities. With seemingly constant discussion of data center development and its role in the Washington energy and political landscape, hearing how they have impacted Chelan and Douglas County generated lots of conversation among commissioners on the bus. And that continued with one of our most intriguing speakers, Dr. Sue Kane, CEO of the North Central Washington Tech Alliance, who talked about building a resilient regional economy, recruiting businesses and growing a tech-savvy workforce, and of course how data centers fit into that work. And finally, it would not be complete without some lawyerly trivia. So many thanks to Tim from CSD who manages to make learning fun and always brings prizes.

Tim featured prominently again at our Directors Seminar the previous week, and we should all consider the great support we get from CSD and the time they spend helping educate ports and keeping us in line with the law. Beyond legal discussions, the Directors Seminar included a rare treat: a visit with college and graduate students at WSU's Hyper Lab, where we saw big ideas in tangible view and heard from an inspiring group of young people who are bringing hydrogen power to life and developing cutting edge companies right there on the Pullman campus. Thanks to Kara and the Port of Whitman County team for graciously welcoming us to the Palouse, and to all the directors who took time to join.

WPPA staff miles kept piling up in the weeks before those two conferences, as James and the Port of Camas-Washougal hosted an in-person meeting of the WPPA Marina Committee, where they were joined by the entire 17th Legislative District delegation and a dedicated group of port marina professionals. Proving there is truly no rest for the weary, this came on the heels of James and Martin's trek with Mandy to Newport, Oregon to join our partners at PNWA at their Summer Conference. Meanwhile, Eric and Carly headed to a Port Townsend stormwater ribbon cutting on the peninsula, just a few days after Carly joined several port members at the Industrial Symbiosis conference in Vancouver, WA.

And this is all since our last newsletter! Does anyone wonder why we love the summer in Washington so much? With so much exciting port work underway, there is no shortage of things to see and people to visit. A few of us will head to Grays Harbor County in the coming days for the long-awaited Terminal 4 celebration, and in spite of no August conferences, the travels continue: our Executive Committee descends on Clarkston for its annual in-person meeting, tour, and dinner at the home port of a new committee member; and the WPPA staff will be in Bremerton for our annual Staff Retreat.

If you wonder where we are, check out our socials, or just give us a call. We never get tired of hearing from you and seeing you, and it helps us do our jobs better. See you on the road!

Spotlight: Port of Sunnyside on Preserving Their Agricultural Heritage while Facilitating Sustainable Development

Located in the middle of Yakima County, Sunnyside is a growing town with a port that is working to ensure that the area's economy continues to grow and diversify, and they're doing so in creative ways that retain the region's agricultural roots.

The Port of Sunnyside, founded in 1964, was the first public port established in Yakima County. It was created on the initiative of a few committed locals who had heard about public ports elsewhere in the state and wanted to bring that economic development engine into their community.

"They gathered signatures, got an initiative on the ballot, got it passed, and that same group of folks became our first port commissioners," said Lucia Navarro, Executive Director at the Port of Sunnyside.

The first order of business was to bring more private industry and jobs to the region. The Commissioners and staff, who understood that initial land development is often a major barrier for companies, got busy with identifying and developing industrial land. Following a model set by other districts across Eastern Washington, the port would purchase unused and underdeveloped land, develop it, and connect it to utilities.

Grown from Agricultural Heritage

The Yakima Valley has long been an agricultural powerhouse, but for many years it lacked the industrial processing power that could prepare produce and other food products for shipment around the country. During the port's early years, they sought to further activate the town's agriculture-based economy, transforming it to supply food to the entire region. This shift focused on expanding regional food processing capabilities, specifically facilities that supported and capitalized on the existing crops and dairy industry.

Today, this approach of developing properties to attract businesses that fit the region continues to be the port's strongest initiative.

"At the moment we do a little of everything," Navarro said. "Property we've developed to be shovel-ready, selling the land to business interests, and operating an industrial wastewater treatment facility."

Wastewater and Circularity

The Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility was built to meet the needs of the large food processors moving into the area, some of which operate on the very property the port acquired and developed. The port's efforts to bring industrial tenants to Sunnyside were so successful that their rate of demand for water treatment exceeded what the city could offer. The port took matters into their own hands, building the plant which today supports nine industries and processes 2 million gallons of water per day.

The wastewater treatment facility is an extremely valuable asset for the port. So much so that they are looking to double its capacity, upgrading from 2 to 4 million gallons of daily treated water. This expansion will allow for future private sector growth while ensuring industrial byproducts remain out of local waterways.



The port's wastewater treatment facility treats food processing waste to irrigate nearby farms, forming a crucial connection in the region's waste reduction and economic development cycle.

The facility isn't the end of the road for the wastewater, however. Once it has been processed and sent through treatment lagoons, the treated, now-clean water is used to irrigate local alfalfa fields. In turn, the alfalfa is fed to dairy cows, the milk from whom is processed and shipped by port tenants. Additionally, the anaerobic digestion process that occurs during water treatment produces biogas as a byproduct. The port's historical and current day activities—from land development to industrial tenant procurement to wastewater treatment—has created a circular process that supports the local agriculture, infrastructure, and economy. Biogas continues to produce new opportunities for circularity in the future.

"We're looking at working with a company called Sunnyside Renewable Natural Gas, which will turn waste from local dairies into natural gas and pipe it out to users," Navarro said. "It'll address odors, dairy waste, minimize manure, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We think it's a win-win."

Repurposing biogas for use around Sunnyside's service area is another key example of ports facilitating circular, symbiotic relationships between the industries that they support.

"Reusing waste helps encourage development and sharing resources," Navarro said. "What better way to turn our waste into a benefit for the whole community?"

This theme of reuse isn't just limited to their industrial lands, however. In addition to developing industrial properties, the Port has rehabilitated historic buildings in downtown Sunnyside, bringing economic vitality back to aging structures. One such building now hosts a local winemaker; another hosts a local brewery, and the port has converted a former motel into a business incubator.



The port's Incubator Lease Program will be hosted at this facility in downtown Sunnyside.

"Rehab is a unique development process," Navarro said. "For brownfield properties we have to pursue funding; it's a lot of work, but it's worth it in the end to see properties taken from contamination to new and ready for development. We have a property at the old Carnation milk plant—it sat vacant for a long time. We demolished the building, cleared and cleaned the site, and now it's ready for development."

As the port looks ahead, they continue to approach the work with an open mind and an eye toward doing business creatively and sustainably.

"We're open to any industries, and we're happy to have anyone willing to join and support our community," Navarro said. "Even if we haven't done something before, we're happy to figure it out."



Historic photograph of the original building that now hosts Co Dinn Cellars and tasting room.

The Port of Sunnyside exemplifies the creative, community-centered thinking that public ports are known for. Whether it's redeveloping old buildings and contaminated properties or looking into new ways of using waste from food processing, the port has worked from its very beginning to diversifying Sunnyside's economy while honoring and supporting the agricultural heritage that makes the Yakima Valley so unique.

"The port is unique in the way that a lot of ports are; we are so dedicated to our community that 'no' is never an answer," said Navarro. "We will always work to figure something out, find solutions, and make sure that we continue to provide opportunities for our community to grow."

Legislative Spotlight: Industrial Symbiosis

Carly Michiels, Senior Director of Environmental Policy

If Industrial symbiosis (IS) is continuing to gain momentum across Washington, and our public ports are helping lead the way. It's becoming clear that ports are natural convenors and well-suited to planning and bringing important stakeholders together in this work.

As you may know from one of our recent conferences—or maybe you joined the Center for Sustainable Infrastructure ([CSI](#)) on a trip to Denmark—IS brings businesses and public partners together to turn one organization's waste streams like heat, water, energy, materials, or agricultural byproducts, into useful resources for another. This approach can lower operating costs, reduce waste, strengthen local supply chains, create new economic opportunities for business recruitment and job growth, and support environmental sustainability!

Ports are particularly well positioned to advance this work. As owners and operators of industrial properties and public infrastructure, ports can bring businesses together, identify opportunities to share resources and support the long-term planning needed to move innovative projects forward.

In past legislative sessions, WPPA has supported and advocated for funding for the Department of Commerce's (Commerce) IS work, recognizing that communities need technical expertise and planning resources to turn promising ideas into viable projects. This is something we heard from many of our port members as a key need in supporting successful IS projects in Washington.

During the 2026 legislative session, WPPA supported [House Bill 1302](#), sponsored by Rep. Julio Cortes, that was signed into law by Governor Ferguson this spring. The new law authorizes municipalities to establish programs that waive utility connection charges for qualifying IS properties. While optional, these programs give communities another economic development tool to help projects overcome upfront infrastructure costs.

With \$1.8 million funded through the Climate Commitment Act, the state legislature also created an IS technical assistance program. Administered by Commerce, the [IS Technical Assistance Program](#) will connect selected communities with CSI's team of engineers, industrial ecologists, infrastructure planners and implementation experts.

Just this week, CSI announced seven communities that have been selected through a competitive application process to receive technical assistance awards. Four of the awardees included ports: The Ports of Bellingham, Pend Oreille, Moses Lake, and Camas-Washougal! Read more about these projects in [this CSI newsletter](#). Over approximately 10 months, the participating communities will receive assistance with activities such as resource mapping, identifying partnerships, evaluations, feasibility studies, and prioritizing projects for future design and capital funding.

This is fantastic news and huge congratulations are in order to all the award winners for continuing important IS work in communities across the state.

In addition to this technical assistance for new IS projects, Washington ports are already demonstrating the potential of this approach. The Port of Pasco has been a statewide leader, advancing an industrial symbiosis park concept and showing how ports can convene partners and connect sustainability with long-term economic development. In case you missed it, we highlighted their amazing IS work in last month's [Manifest](#) (Port Spotlight).

WPPA will continue advocating for policies and resources that help members develop innovative projects, strengthen regional economies, and turn potential waste into shared economic value.

Knowing the Waters

This month's installment of [Knowing the Waters](#), written by Tim Schermetzler of CSD Attorneys at Law, discusses procurement of professional services performed by engineers, land surveyors, architects, and landscape architects (commonly known as "A&E services"). It focuses on compliance with regulations for on-call contracts, which was a topic of heightened interest for ports last year and prompted productive dialogue between WPPA and the State Auditor's Office.

Grants and Resources for Ports

United States Marine Highway Program – Applications due August 31, 2026

There is up to \$10,772,270 available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 under the United States Marine Highway Program (USMHP), administered by the Maritime Administration (MARAD). Funds for the USMHP are awarded on a competitive basis to projects on designated U.S. Marine Highway Routes that provide a coordinated and capable alternative to landside transportation or that promote marine highway transportation.

Applications are due August 31, 2026, at 11:59:59 pm Eastern Daylight Time.

Important Changes for FY 2026:

- Rating rubrics have been updated to align with statutory requirements.
- "Workforce Development and Job Quality" has been **removed** as a selection consideration.
- "Innovative Technology" has been **added** as a new selection consideration. *
- The criteria have been aligned with current Executive Orders and Administration priorities.

***Innovative Technology Section:** If you need help, Xochitl Castañeda (xochitl.castaneda@dot.gov) is available to discuss this or any section of the USMHP program and explore how your Port's project incorporates novel approaches (such as deploying advanced technologies to enhance safety or efficiency, using innovative methods in design and construction to reduce costs, or integrating solutions that strengthen port resilience). Without this section, your applications may not be accepted.

Marine Highway Route Sponsors Contact Information:

- Port of Portland: Richard Vincent Richard.Vincent@portofportland.com
- State of Alaska: Judy Chapman judy.chapman@alaska.gov
- Port of Port Angeles: Katherine Frazier: katharinef@portofpa.com

Washington Zero-Emission Incentive Program – Funding Available Now

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) [Washington Zero-Emission Incentive Program \(WAZIP\)](#) is offering up to \$112 million in vouchers to help businesses purchase zero-emission medium and heavy-duty (MHD) commercial vehicles and equipment. Technical assistance is available [here](#) on the WAZIP webpage.

CERB Micro-Grants for Rural Ports – Applications Due September 14

CERB is still accepting applications for its Rural Ports Program! The last round of available funding is focused on micro-grants in support of projects that cost \$200,000 or less. These micro-grants range from \$20,000 to \$100,000, with no fund match requirement, and can be utilized for a slew of infrastructure repair, improvement, and development activities. Just for example, WPPA member Ports have used these micro-grants to improve parking in support of nearby businesses and even to upgrade electric infrastructure at local fairgrounds. **Applications are due to CERB by September 14th** and supporting documents can be found on [CERB's website](#).

Washington Recreation and Conservation Grant Opportunities: *Application Webinar August 4, Applications due November 3*

Boating Facilities Program (RCO)

[Washington Recreation and Conservation Office](#) offers the [Boating Facilities Program](#) funds, which supports eligible entities to **acquire, develop, and renovate facilities for motorized boats and other watercraft**. This can apply to boat ramps, guest moorage, support facilities, and more. The information manual for the 2026 round of grants will be published in August, and the application webinar is on August 4. These grants come around every second year on the even years (2022, 2024, 2026, 2028...), so don't wait until 2028 if you have a boat facilities project to start now.

- **Applications are due on November 3, 2026.**
- A [comprehensive recreation or conservation plan is required for application](#) and must be submitted by September 1, 2026.
- The grant program has a 25% match requirement.

Firearms and Archer Range Recreation Program (RCO)

Washington RCO is offering grants for the **acquisition, development, and renovation of firearm ranges and archery training facilities** on the same timeline as the Boating Facilities Program. The [Firearms and Archer Range Recreation Program](#) has a 50% match requirement and a grant limit of \$150,000, with a total available funding of \$600,000.

USDA Grants and Loans - *Applications Accepted on Rolling Basis*

USDA Community Facilities Program

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers an ongoing [Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program](#) for public bodies (including ports), community-based non-profit corporations, or Federally Recognized Tribes to **develop essential community facilities in rural areas** (cities, villages, townships and towns including Federally Recognized Tribal Lands with no more than 20,000 residents according to the latest [U.S. Census Data](#)). Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis from October 1-September 30.

The program **prioritizes small communities with a population of 5,500 or less** and low-income communities having a median household income below 80% of the state non-metropolitan median household income.

USDA Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program

USDA offers an ongoing [Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program](#) to provide **funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage** to households and businesses in eligible rural areas (rural areas and towns with populations of 10,000 or less, Tribal lands in rural areas, and Colonias).

Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis from October 1-September 30.

USDA Strategic Economic and Community Development (SECD) funding to support implementation of strategic community investment plans

The [SECD program](#) is a **funding program to support multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral strategic community investment plans**. Created by local stakeholders, these plans help build rural prosperity by amplifying a community's unique strengths. For more information, reach out to rd.secd@usda.gov.

To be eligible for SECD, a project must:

- Be eligible for the covered program (listed below).
- Be carried out in a rural area.
- Support a multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral strategic community investment plan.

Covered Rural Development Programs

Priority may be given to applications submitted through the following programs:

- [Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program](#) (application open)
- [Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program](#) (application open)
- [Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program](#) (application open)
- [Water and Waste Disposal Loan Guarantees](#) (application open)
- [Rural Business Development Grants](#) (applications currently closed)
- [Community Connect Grants](#) (applications currently closed)

EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessments – Applications Accepted on Rolling Basis

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has once again offered funding to support communities, through the [Targeted Brownfields Assessments \(TBA\) in Region 10](#) (Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington), with **free environmental assessments, cleanup planning, and visioning services for brownfield properties** with redevelopment potential. Applications are currently open and accepted on a rolling basis.

Visit the [website](#) or view the [factsheet](#) for more information about the program, and reach out to the EPA Region 10 TBA Coordinator, Molly Vaughan (vaughan.molly@epa.gov) with questions or with a completed [application form](#).

Washington Zero-Emission Incentive Program – Funding Available Now

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) [Washington Zero-Emission Incentive Program \(WAZIP\)](#) is offering up to \$112 million in vouchers to help businesses purchase zero-emission medium and heavy-duty (MHD) commercial vehicles and equipment. **Technical assistance is available [here](#)** on the WAZIP webpage.

MRSC Trainings for Local Government – July-November, Virtual and In-Person

Upcoming Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (**MRSC**) **webinars are open for registration**, covering a variety of topics. Check out [their website](#) for a list of all currently planned trainings; additional information will be added as it becomes available.

Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) Diesel Program – Grants Available

If your organization's diesel emissions reduction project prioritizes old, large engines, engines with daily usage, and/or engines that operate within areas or close to businesses or communities with high diesel pollution, [send your project information to PSCAA](#) for a chance to receive a 25-60% reimbursement for diesel equipment replacement.

Clean Buildings Performance Standards: Resources and Grants Available

The [Tier 1 Early Adopter Incentive Program](#) will provide up to \$16 million in incentives for approved applicants. Tier 1 applies to non-residential, hotel, motel, and dormitory buildings greater than 50,000 square feet. Demonstrated early compliance with the Clean Buildings Performance Standard can earn building owners a one-time base incentive payment of \$2/square foot, up to \$75 million. This incentive is to cover up to half the cost of energy-saving measures identified in an energy audit. A [Tier 1 incentives estimator](#) is now available to assist building owners in planning their Clean Buildings Performance Standard compliance path.

The [Tier 2 Early Adopter Incentive Program](#) will provide a base incentive of \$0.30/square foot to owners of buildings between 20,000-50,001 square feet who benchmark their building's energy use, identify an energy use intensity target, and develop and implement an energy management plan and operations and maintenance program. Additional incentives are available for multifamily building owners who are willing to sign an [anti-displacement agreement](#).

Commerce Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program

Commerce provides **technical assistance in accessing federal tax credits for clean energy projects**, including solar, battery storage, wind energy, geothermal systems, electric vehicles (EVs), and EV charging infrastructure through the [Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program \(CETCAP\)](#).

Federal clean energy tax credits are expiring soon – act soon if you have a project for which you are seeking federal clean energy tax credits. Expiration dates vary by project/technology type.

The Community Builders Collective: A Statewide Network for Project Leaders

Launching this fall, the Community Builders Collective (CBC) is a free, statewide peer network from CERB for the people behind community and economic development infrastructure projects in rural, tribal, and historically under-resourced communities.

CBC members get:

- **A statewide network of peers** facing similar challenges and opportunities
- **Practical resources and tools** to support project development
- **Live training and learning opportunities** focused on real-time needs
- **24/7 access to the community** (plus CERB staff when needed)

If you're navigating complex infrastructure projects with limited time and staff— the CBC is here to help you get it done, together. For more information sign up [here](#).

Washington State Treasurer's LOCAL Program

The LOCAL program, offered through the Office of the Washington State Treasurer, **provides Washington municipalities with a cost-effective way to finance equipment and/or real estate projects**. Participants can take advantage of the current program rating of Moody's Aa1, low fees and expenses, technical assistance, and access to the tax-exempt bond market.

Check out the [LOCAL Program guide](#) and visit the [Program FAQs](#) for more information.

Climate Resources at Washington Climate Action

The [Washington Climate Action](#) website is a first-stop shop for funding or other resources related to climate and natural resources, including grant writing support and contracting information.

Commerce Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) – applications accepted on rolling basis

The [Brownfields RLF](#) provides **low interest loans to entities undertaking cleanup of contaminated properties** to support redevelopment, promote public health and safety, improve environmental quality, and create jobs at and around brownfield sites. Average loan amounts are approximately \$500,000 and up to 50% of the loan may be forgiven for public entities. Loan terms are typically 5 years or less, and the interest rate is negotiated based on project need. A 1% loan fee is required.

Commerce Small Business Credit Initiative – accepted on a rolling basis

Through the Washington State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), the Washington State Department of Commerce is collaborating with Heritage Bank to offer the Owner-Occupied Commercial Real Estate Loan Program. The program **allows Heritage to make loans to businesses that own the buildings in which they operate, and who wish to purchase new buildings or expand current operations**. This means port tenants who are contemplating expansion but need capital could have access to low-interest loans to support their downpayment.

Heritage Bank administers the program. You can find more information [on their website](#). The bank has also worked with Commerce to [publish an informative one-pager](#).

DOE Energy Ready Charging Smart Program – free technical assistance

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [Energy Ready Charging Smart Program](#) offers free technical assistance to help local governments adopt procedures and practices that facilitate the growth of electric vehicles (EVs).

DOE E2C Program Expert Match – free technical assistance

The DOE's [Energy to Communities \(E2C\): Expert Match](#) program offers free, short-term technical assistance to address near-term energy challenges in local communities.

The Federal Funds Grant Writing Assistance Program

The [Federal Funds Grant Writing Assistance Program](#) is designed for tribes, community-based organizations, local government agencies, and other entities to help prepare and submit federal grant applications. This resource is available now and can include services such as grant application planning, writing, and review and guidance for managing federal awards.

Federal Clean Energy Tax Assistance Program – free and available now

Administered through Commerce, the [Federal Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program](#) offers tax incentives to eligible entities (including ports) through the Inflation Reduction Act. Free resources, including personalized support from clean energy tax attorneys, are available [here](#).

Highlighted Events



Aerial view of Port of Grays Harbor, courtesy of the Port

WPPA Port Academy Series Fall Edition: September 16-17 at the Port of Grays Harbor

Attention Port Staff: [Registration](#) is now open for the Fall Edition of the [Port Academy Series of 2026!](#) We are excited to share that this class will take place at the Port of Grays Harbor on Thursday, September 17th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with optional activities taking place on the afternoon of Wednesday the 16th. Designed primarily for port staff, the Port Academy Series is ideal for those looking to deepen their understanding of port governance, operations, environmental stewardship, and long-range planning. Whether you are a Port Manager,

Finance Officer, Environmental Specialist, or work in another area of port operations, this event offers a practical opportunity to learn from peers and explore approaches that may be applicable to your own port. Lunch is provided and to support meaningful discussion, registration is limited to a small group of 25 participants. If you have any questions, please contact [James Cockburn](#).



Lounge at the Renaissance Hotel, courtesy of the Hotel

Environmental Seminar: September 24-25 at the Renaissance Hotel, Seattle

Registration to open this week for the [WPPA Environmental Seminar](#), taking place this September at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Seattle! This year will feature an optional tour at the Port of Seattle, and 1.5 days of engaging speakers, meaningful conversations, and plenty of networking time with your peers. Watch your email for an invite and be sure to reach out to [Mandy Lill](#) if you have any questions or don't receive anything. You can also contact Mandy if you are interested in sponsoring this event. We have several great options that give you various levels of exposure. We hope to see you in Seattle!

WPPA 2026 Conference Calendar - Save the Date

- **Small Ports: Oct. 22-23**, Campbell's Resort, Chelan
- **Winter Meeting: Dec 9-11**, Hilton Vancouver
 - *Formerly known as the Annual Meeting*



The grind never stops for Arthur at WPPA HQ.

As Arthur Sees It

Notes from the Executive Director and his dog

Just a few days ago, some curious news broke, celebrated by Governor Bob Ferguson on Twitter and noted—without significant fanfare—by various news outlets around WA: Washington had been ranked the #11 in CNBC's "Best State for Doing Business," up from #14 the prior year. I say curious, because it came on the heels of news that the recently passed "Millionaire's Tax" would be challenged on the November ballot after opponents had collected sufficient signatures to get it there. This news comes as many in the business, and indeed port community, continue to discuss the big hurdles they face to growing businesses here, recruiting new companies, and attracting top tier talent.

This dichotomy was on the minds of those gathered at the SeaTac Hilton last Thursday, where I attended the now-annual Economic Future Solutions Summit, hosted jointly by the Association of Washington Business and the Washington Roundtable. The event's co-host, Rachel Smith, CEO at the Washington Roundtable, used her

introductory remarks to highlight the two sides of Washington's economic coin. Yes, we'd received this ranking from CNBC. [But the same report](#) cited by Governor Ferguson gives Washington a D- in cost of doing business, along with a D in "business friendliness" and a D+ in cost of living. Recently, the [Seattle Times flagged the same concerning statistic](#), noting that the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue region was the sixth-most expensive place to live in the country.

Another dichotomy identified in SeaTac last Thursday is one that sits with me as I write this today: the need for optimism, even as there is seemingly growing consensus that we are going in the wrong direction. The event featured a fascinating conversation between Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck and three leaders of state departments of commerce from Connecticut, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. All have seen bipartisan action to address economic challenges and spur economic growth, and one shared some simple but maybe profound advice: *you cannot achieve progress in economic development without optimism that it will happen*. More on that in a moment.

While other speakers across the program may have agreed on the need for optimism, few expressed it outwardly. Former Governor Gary Locke was joined onstage by longtime Director of the Office of Financial Management, Marty Brown. They shared a few messages to our current state lawmakers: *take a breath, slow down, set priorities, practice saying “no.”* As Governor Locke put it, you can have one priority, or you have none. Trying to do everything, in a constrained state budget environment, will leave us in the situation we see now: ever-increasing state budgets, without corresponding increases in revenue. Governor Locke’s comments were notable not just for their apparent moderation, but for their alignment with similar remarks from another recent Democratic Governor, Christine Gregoire. In May, Governor Gregoire made headlines at another AWB event by saying simply: *we don’t have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem*.

It was revealed recently that [the two had spoken about this privately](#), and decided that it was worth jointly alerting the Washington voters to their perspective and its divergence from the actions of the current Democratic majority in Olympia. I was struck by Governor Gregoire’s reference to her initial experiences as a Democrat, growing up in the party of John F. Kennedy. Many of you have heard me speak about my admiration of President Kennedy, who inspired me to pursue a career in politics. I inhaled his biographies and speeches while I was an impressionable high school and college student. To hear Governor Gregoire, who my dad worked for as an Assistant Attorney General for many years, say that she didn’t recognize this version of her Democratic party, was tough to read.

So, what about that optimism I mentioned? The other interesting dynamic that overlayed the SeaTac event last week was Governor Ferguson’s recent Executive Order to form an Economic Development Council. Comprised of 26 business and civic leaders from around WA (and yes, I’ve heard those of you who remind me that “around WA” means mostly Puget Sound), this group will begin meeting this August and will advise the Governor on strategies to boost the WA economy. We are lucky: it features two Port leaders, Julianna Marler from the Port of Vancouver and Steve Metruck from the Port of Seattle. They are gracious and community-minded and have assured me they will work with me and other ports to elevate issues of relevance to *all ports* in that forum.

But as you can imagine, plenty of observers have welcomed the announcement of this council with skepticism or outright derision. And I have my moments of doubt as well, as anyone would. But I have also said, to many of you reading this and to friends and family who’ve asked, that *we have to be optimistic about this*. It’s a Governor taking a step in our direction, asking us to share our ideas about economic growth with him. It’s an opening, a glint of light through which we can see possibly more engagement and maybe even progress. And we have to be optimistic, because what other choice do we have? This economy is resilient, our ports are creative, and our businesses are world-renowned. We can take those positives and grow them into momentum, and we can use this Council as a vehicle to do that. And if I’m wrong? We can look back at this column years from now and all have a good laugh!