



## ***WCOG Sets Its 2018 Legislative Priorities***

**Seattle**—Laws governing the use of police body cameras and transparency in the legislature itself top the list of Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG) priorities for the upcoming legislative session in Olympia. Each year, WCOG identifies transparency issues that need legislative attention and then work to ensure those issues are addressed. The Coalition works year round with other transparency advocates and public agencies to ensure citizens have easy access to government information and meetings.

“We are encouraged by the willingness of public officials and lawmakers to work with us on solutions that make openness in government possible. Our goal is and has always been the free flow of government information to citizens,” said WCOG President, Toby Nixon. “We look forward to working with our lawmakers, public officials, and citizens in the quest to make Washington State transparency laws the best in the nation.”

As far as police body cameras are concerned, WCOG believes lawmakers should adopt permanent, statewide provisions for the collection, retention, and disclosure of body-worn camera recordings. Exemptions to disclosure should be narrow, and consistent with existing protections provided in the Public Records Act (PRA) for personal privacy and law enforcement investigative needs. Agencies should provide body-worn camera videos at reasonable cost, using best available redaction and production technology. To assure compliance with the PRA, requesters who must go to court to obtain access to body-worn camera videos must be entitled to recover fees, costs, and penalties as they would for other types of public records.

The Coalition will also work to ensure legislative records are transparent. Records of the legislature, including those of individual legislators and legislative branch agencies, should be subject to retention and disclosure the same as records of other agencies subject to the Public Records Act, with no special exclusions from the definition of “public record”. If a provision is needed for withholding some information, the legislature should enact specific narrowly-crafted exemptions from disclosure rather than broadly excluding legislative records from the provisions of the PRA.

Other issues WCOG will be addressing during this session include cost recovery for PRA related requests and denials, ongoing stakeholder processes for future issues that arise, and continuing to fight exemptions and any further weakening of our open meetings and open records laws.

For a full list of WCOG’s 2018 Legislative Priorities, [click here](#).