



2026 Pacific Northwest SHARED FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

The Portland and Seattle Metro Chambers share advocacy priorities for addressing policy and funding challenges in the two largest urban centers in the Pacific Northwest. We share these priorities with our Cascadia Innovation Corridor partner, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. This combined federal agenda calls for prioritizing the Pacific Northwest and Cascadia Region to accelerate continued progress in the significantly altered, post COVID-19 pandemic, economic landscape.

Concerns about financial security and rising costs continue to be the top concern for residents and businesses across the Pacific Northwest.

The Seattle Metro Chamber fall 2025 Index survey revealed strong public concern about the economy and strong support for actions that protect the local economy and enhance affordability:

- 84% want policymakers to make it easier to do business and **expand access to good-paying jobs.**
- **77% support incentives for businesses** to create family-wage jobs to help maintain economic resilience.

The Portland Metro Chamber’s 2026 voter sentiment poll found that concerns about cost of living and pessimism about future economic opportunities have become paramount with residents and businesses:

- 63% rate their **economic prospects as poor**
- 52% report that they are **worse off financially** than a year ago
- 72% say that government should be doing **more to support businesses**

The following policy priorities will make our regional economies more resilient by helping small businesses grow, keeping commerce moving, producing more housing, and making communities safer, all while supporting the necessary workforce and global market access for our large, traded-sector employers to succeed.

Top Policy Priorities

- Keep commerce and people moving safely in the Pacific Northwest.
- Maintain federal commitments to community health, education, childcare, public safety, parks, forests, housing, and research.
- Increase access to affordable housing and homeless services.
- Support and maintain access to global markets.
- Modernize the nation’s energy transmission infrastructure to meet the needs of the 21st century global economy.
- Modernize forest and wildfire management.
- Keep our economies strong by:
 - Pro-growth tax policies
 - Permitting and regulatory reform
 - Support future workforce needs
- Continue to address the fentanyl and opioid addiction crises.



Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation and port infrastructure are critical to maintaining our region's international competitiveness. Effective, efficient and well-funded transportation infrastructure allows people to get to work, goods to move and to market, and businesses to grow and compete on the national scale. We ask the federal government to invest in maintaining the region's transportation infrastructure including Interstate 5 and the I-5 Bridge Replacement (IBR); preserve support from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to expand the capacity of our local transportation system with projects like Sound Transit Phase 3; and strengthen international commerce and mobility along the Cascadia Corridor through investments in port capacity and new enterprises like high-speed rail.

REQUEST: Advocate for continued federal partnership to deliver on the critical I-5 Bridge Replacement and Rose Quarter Improvement projects, including funding for FTA's CIG program to support light rail transit service over the IBR and support for the Rose Quarter project. Both projects are located in the Portland Metro area but are essential to the flow of goods and people along the entire West Coast.

REQUEST: Advocate for continued partnership in the Cascadia High Speed Rail initiative and additional investments in the Cascades Corridor, particularly for the preservation of Portland's historic Union Station. The public and private sector continue to seek \$200 million in federal funding, including the Federal Railroad Administration's multiple passenger rail funding programs, to meet the 20% (or \$50 million) non-federal match. The City of Portland is investing \$15M and needs approximately \$30M-\$35M total from the State of Oregon and State of Washington to demonstrate local commitment to the project.

REQUEST: Continue federal partnership to enhance the Puget Sound ferry systems in the Seattle region.

REQUEST: Meet the priorities called for by the *Keep America Moving Initiative*, including:

- Enhance safety, efficiency and reliability
- Sustain necessary funding levels
- Modernize the permitting process
- Fix the Highway Trust Fund

Housing Production

The Cascadia Region continues to face a historic housing supply crisis weighed down by high interest rates, cumbersome permitting processes, rising material costs, and over regulation. Additionally, cities across the nation continue to need the federal government to partner to revitalize central cities that continue to recover slowly from the economic impacts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

REQUEST: Support the bi-partisan *21st Century ROAD to Housing Act*. This historic, bi-partisan legislation combines elements of the *Housing for the 21st Century Act* (H.R. 6644), which passed the House, and the *Renewing Opportunity in the American Dream (ROAD) to Housing Act* (S. 2651), which passed the Senate.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to increase investments to allow greater access to emergency shelter and affordable workforce housing, and support funding requests for transformative development projects that will produce thousands of units of much-needed housing in Portland's Central City, such as the OMSI District, New Albina and Rose Quarter, and the former federal post office/Broadway Corridor projects.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to support policies that assist downtown revitalization, including commercial-to-residential conversion incentives such as the tax credits proposed in the *Revitalizing Downtowns and Main Streets Act* (H.R. 2410).

Public Safety

The Pacific Northwest has some of the highest incidences of organized retail crime in the nation. Law enforcement agencies continue to struggle with staffing and capacity to address these nonviolent crimes. Furthermore, the Cascadia Region continues to be impacted by the inter-related opioid/fentanyl and behavioral health crises.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to support our state and local public safety needs by investing in law enforcement partnerships, recruitment and retention, and increased capacity to combat organized retail crime and its impacts on our local business community. We specifically support the *Combating Organized Retail Crime Act* of 2023 (S.140/H.R. 895) and urge its reintroduction and passage in the 119th Congress.

REQUEST: Continue to increase federal investments to reduce opioid supply and expand behavioral health systems by increasing providers, access to recovery beds, access to rehabilitation services, and community-based treatment infrastructure that supports workforce participation, community stability, and central city recovery.

Immigration Reform

Pacific Northwest employers of all sizes and across all industries are facing chronic workforce shortages that significantly limit the ability of businesses to grow and meet current demand. The shortcomings of our legal immigration system are key contributing factors to employers' struggles to hire and retain the talent they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

As demand for workers has increased in recent years, the outdated and arbitrarily low visa quotas, onerous compliance burdens, decades-long backlogs, and obsolete eligibility requirements that pervade employment-based visa programs leave many companies out in the cold when it comes to adequately meeting their workforce needs.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to finally enact federal immigration reform by supporting policies that will spur economic growth, support our nation's workforce, and boost job creation. The goal should be to implement long-term fixes to our broken immigration system that address the artificial constraints on legal immigration.

REQUEST: Enforce illegal immigration laws while respecting the rights of all residents of the United States. Overly aggressive, menacing, and at times, violent tactics utilized by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have had a significantly adverse effect on small businesses and communities across the Pacific Northwest. Small businesses and some industries now struggle to find workers and customers in areas of the region targeted for ICE enforcement.

Economic Development

- Support and maintain access to global markets.
- Maintain competitive tax rates that encourage business investment and economic growth.
- Slow the rapid growth in the cost of living for consumers.
- Modernize regulatory and permitting systems to reduce the time and cost of building housing, essential infrastructure, and critical economic development projects.
- Keep America competitive by supporting immigration reform that addresses constraints to legal immigration to support the workforce demands of a modern, globally integrated economy.

Pacific Northwest companies are among the most competitive businesses in the global economy, making stable international trade vital to the region's economy. International trade supports nearly 1 million jobs in Washington state. The 2025 Portland Metro Chamber's State of International Trade report found that 1 in 8 Oregon jobs are connected to trade and 9% of the state's GDP is attributable to exports. And though the Pacific Northwest is home to some of our nation's export giants, 88% of export activity is from small and medium-sized companies. Punitive tariffs pose a grave threat to the Pacific Northwest economy and the success of employers of all sizes, especially small businesses.

Additionally, like economically critical regions around the nation, the Pacific Northwest will need to modernize energy transmission, reliability and availability to remain competitive in the global economy and meet the basic needs of businesses and residents. As AI and other transformative technologies continue to rapidly advance and come to market, our region is already beginning to experience the strains of our current grid infrastructure with rising utility bills and capacity constraints.

REQUEST: We ask our delegations to work with the Administration to advance bi-partisan solutions to modernize and build out the nation's energy grid, including modernization of the Bonneville Power Administration, to meet the current and future needs of the 21st century economy.

REQUEST: Take a critical first step toward restoring global stability and the stabilization of fuel prices by negotiating a swift end to hostilities in Iran and across the Middle East.

REQUEST: The Oregon Business Plan and Seattle Metro Chamber applaud the extension of State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction to 2030 and the cap increase to \$40,000. We urge Congress to extend SALT beyond its 2030 sunset.

REQUEST: We encourage our delegations to protect the following programs in budget reconciliation: programs that support housing production like Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and HOME investment partnership; the Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC); tax exempt status of municipal bonds which are crucial to funding major infrastructure projects.

REQUEST: Preserve state flexibility, reducing administrative burden, and avoiding coverage churn—especially for rural and seasonal workers – in Medicaid / SNAP.

International Trade & Workforce Development

The international tariffs implemented by the Trump Administration have had a devastating effect on the Pacific Northwest economy. Oregon alone saw exports decrease by a staggering \$6B or 17% in 2025. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court overturned the tariffs in the 2026 Trump v. Learning Resources decision, tariffs continue with little clarity on how revenues collected under the original tariff policy will be refunded to businesses. Additionally, growing global instability and the rapid increase of the price of oil continue to produce economic headwinds and drive up the cost of doing business.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to oppose punitive tariffs and any international trade policies that threaten the health of our industries dependent on the global supply chain.

REQUEST: We ask both Oregon and Washington's delegation to support legislation that will refund tariff revenue collected under the disqualified tariffs to American businesses. We urge your support for the RELIEF Act sponsored by Congresswoman Janelle Bynum (OR-5) and the Refund Tariffs Act, sponsored by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon.

REQUEST: We ask Oregon and Washington's U.S. Senate delegation to work with the majority to support the SPEED Act, which was passed by the House. The SPEED Act will help the nation build again by speeding the time and certainty of energy and critical infrastructure projects.

REQUEST: We ask that both Oregon and Washington’s delegation support the CERTAIN Act, which will ensure federal agencies stick to timelines and prevent changing political administrations from reversing prior permitting decisions.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to continue supporting workforce development in our region’s top industries, such as Aerospace, Manufacturing, Athletic and Outdoor Apparel, and Technology, to ensure the region’s companies remain internationally competitive.

REQUEST: Protect funding for higher education student financial aid programs, and fund the Pell Grant at the sum necessary to meet the maximum award amount of \$7,595 per grant. Pell Grants are the cornerstone of financial aid, providing targeted federal resources to students most in need of support to earn a postsecondary education and gain experience and skills needed to succeed in the nation’s workforce. By 2031, more than 7 out of 10 jobs will require postsecondary education or training. Typical earnings for bachelor’s degree holders are 84% higher than those whose highest degree is a high school diploma, and college graduates on average make \$1.2 million more over their lifetime. College graduates are half as likely to be unemployed as their peers who only have a high school diploma. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 178 job categories will require a bachelor’s degree from 2023-2033.

Affordable & Accessible Childcare

The lack of affordable childcare across the Pacific Northwest significantly affects businesses by limiting workforce participation, increasing turnover rates, driving up recruitment and training costs, and reducing the talent pool, making it harder for businesses to grow.

REQUEST: We ask the federal government to increase investments in state childcare subsidy programs (CCDBG) to match market rate and grant programs that directly support childcare providers, increase funding for the Child Care Development Fund, and renew the \$24B investment in the childcare industry, originally through the Child Care & Development Block Grant program.

Research, National Parks, Forests & A World-Class Education System

The Pacific Northwest is home to cutting-edge, world-class, research-driven, post-secondary education institutions. Oregon and Washington are also responsible for the preservation of many of our nation’s most important national parks, waterways and forests.

Research funding not only leads to major breakthroughs in innovation, new technologies, and life-saving medical treatments, it supports millions of jobs and is key to advancing our economy and global competitiveness. The Portland and Seattle Chambers are members of the Business for Federal Research Coalition, which has 85 members in 36 states representing every major region of the country. The BFRF Coalition is committed to ensuring that policymakers understand the importance of federal research support for the economy and global competitiveness, and regularly engages with Congress, the Administration, and other business and academic groups to support strategic growth of research and development.

REQUEST: Level research funding with FY25 across all federal agencies to encourage stable investments in local communities and incentivize our best researchers and innovators to stay in the U.S.

REQUEST: Release already approved grants to ensure federal funds are not wasted by stopping worthwhile projects midway.

REQUEST: We appreciate and commend the administration's leadership in pushing for improvement and modernization of our nation's antiquated forest and wildfire management strategy by proposing the Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy. As you engage with stakeholders and Congress to finalize and implement this new plan, we request that the administration endorse active management including fuel reduction, prescribed fire, stewardship contracting, and workforce/mill capacity.

REQUEST: Advocate for continued federal partnership to strengthen disaster resilience across the Cascadia region, including investments in seismic retrofit, bridge resilience, and the protection of critical freight and emergency-response routes. Federal transportation policy should better prioritize disaster-readiness and project delivery for infrastructure that is essential to economic continuity and public safety following major seismic events.

