



BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

2022 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

SUPPORT HB 1333 – RURAL COUNTIES’ SALES TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

Benton County supports House Bill 1333, renewing the rural county sales tax credit program, which provides a .09% credit against the state sales tax to rural counties for economic development uses. The program was originally authorized by the legislature in 1997. Money from this program funds the County’s Rural County Capital Fund and accumulates approximately \$300,000 a month. This funding is disbursed to cities, ports, and the County for approved economic development projects and is a key source of local funding. Please visit our website at <https://tinyurl.com/BentonPoint09> for more examples of projects funded through this program.

CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THREE RIVERS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RECOVERY CENTER

Thanks to the hard work of our legislative delegation, Benton County received \$2.75 million in the 2021 Capital Budget to complete site feasibility, architectural and engineering work, and design work for the Three Rivers Behavioral Health Recovery Center. The Recovery Center will provide over 550,000 individuals access to a full continuum of behavioral health services at multiple points of entry, including a community/law enforcement referral point, withdrawal management and stabilization services, residential substance use treatment services, and a 16-bed evaluation and treatment center. The County anticipates completing design work by mid-2023. With estimated construction costs totaling over \$13 million, continued State partnership on the next phase of the project is critical to its timely completion. Benton County anticipates requesting funding for construction of the Recovery Center in the 2023 Capital Budget.

REGULAR MEETINGS OUTSIDE OF COUNTY SEAT

Benton County requests a change to [RCW 36.32.080](#) to allow monthly, regular meetings to be held outside of the county seat. While Benton County’s seat is in Prosser, most of the business, and most County facilities, are located in Kennewick. Additionally, most Benton County constituents are located within the greater Tri-Cities area. Counties are currently authorized to hold one meeting outside of the County seat once per quarter; increasing the frequency would provide greater predictability for constituents and enhance public participation.

SUPPORT HB 1407 – ALLOW COUNTIES TO RAISE EX PARTE FILING FEES

County Clerks are seeking legislation to permit a county to raise the Ex Parte filing fee from \$30 up to \$50. Ex Parte filing requires County Clerks offices to gather signatures that, under a normal filing, the filing party would be required to procure. Due to increased Ex Parte filings since the Covid-19 outbreak, County Clerk offices are seeing significant increases in staffing time and resources. The Ex Parte system is commonly used by legal professionals, who appreciate the service, as it saves their clients time and money. A fee increase for this service would not affect the general public, since there are other options in most counties to have documents signed. The filing fee has not increased since 2009.

SUPPORT HB 1376 – CONVERT REGISTERED LAND TO RECORDED PROPERTY

County Auditors continue to seek legislation to abolish Torrens. Torrens is an outdated, labor-intensive system of land registration separate from standard recording systems. The system requires a judicial component that creates an unnecessarily confusing and time-consuming burden for applicants and county offices alike. Only a handful of counties currently allow Torrens, however Benton County recently received notice of intent of an individual to register land under this system. Because no land in Benton County had ever been registered under Torrens, multiple departments were required to participate in establishing procedures and adopting court rules. By abolishing Torrens, an inefficient and antiquated system would be replaced by standardized land registration.