



2025 Legislative Priorities

Washington's economy has demonstrated resilience, yet uncertainty remains. Each legislative session, hundreds of state bills directly impact the retail sector. The Washington Retail Association's Policy and Government Affairs team collaborates closely with retailers to advocate on their behalf. Although federal initiatives may capture headlines, it is often state legislation that has the most significant effects on the industry. As the leading voice for retailers in Washington State, WR is committed to championing policies in the 2025 legislative session that foster stability, safeguard businesses, and support the growth and success of retailers and their employees.

Artificial Intelligence

As AI becomes more integrated into the retail industry, regulations should foster innovation without stifling low-risk retail applications. To encourage balanced AI legislation, our priority is to:

- Support a risk-based approach that targets high-risk applications, safeguarding retail innovation.
- Advocate for practical AI regulations developed collaboratively with legislators.
- Oppose broad restrictions on AI that could inadvertently stifle retail innovation and technological advancement.

Environmental Regulations

Unnecessary environmental regulations often burden businesses actively committed to sustainability. To support innovation and practical environmental stewardship, our priority is to:

- Support federal solutions to avoid a patchwork of state-by-state regulations that complicate compliance for businesses.
- Advocate for science-based regulations that balance operational realities with environmental progress.
- Oppose excessive environmental mandates that hinder proactive businesses, stifle sustainability efforts, and add costs without clear benefits.



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Public Safety, Retail Theft, & Organized Retail Crime

Rising retail theft and organized retail crime threatens public safety and the viability of retail businesses. WR is committed to a comprehensive approach to address these challenges. To enhance safety and reduce retail crime, our priority will be to:

- Support funding for small business theft prevention grants and local law enforcement initiatives.
- Advocate for policies to redefine theft to include concealment, increase penalties for repeat offenders and accomplices, and expand prosecution resources.
- Oppose any efforts that reduce law enforcement resources or weaken the prosecution of ORC, which would adversely impact retailers and community safety.

Taxation, New Revenue, & Spending

The state's unchecked spending growth has led to increased tax and fee proposals that unfairly target and burden retailers. Despite substantial tax collection increases over the past decade, the issue lies in spending priorities, not revenue. To promote fiscal responsibility and protect businesses, our priority is to:

- Support legislation that makes it more challenging to impose new taxes on businesses and prioritizes efficient use of existing revenue.
- Advocate for a reduction in unnecessary taxes and fees, particularly those that disproportionately impact retailers and small businesses.
- Oppose any new taxes or fees introduced to fund unsustainable programs or initiatives lacking accountability and transparency.



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Employment Law

Washington's already high minimum wage creates challenges for retailers, causing competitive disparities and wage compression. Proposals to allow unemployment benefits for striking workers add financial risks for employers, potentially destabilizing the UI system. Additionally, rising long-term disability trend in the already most costly workers' compensation system in the nation will strain its sustainability and a reversal of the long-held policy goal. To support a fair balance for workers and manageable costs for employers, our priority is to:

- Support policies that prevent added financial strains and protect retailers' economic viability, enabling investment in employee development and customer service.
- Advocate for policies that address wage compression without mandated increases and ensure fair decision-making in compensation systems.
- Oppose expansions of workers' comp and minimum wage policies and any increases in unemployment premiums from union strikes that burden all businesses.

Consumer Protection

Unnecessary regulations increase costs for businesses and negatively impact customers. Effective protections should enhance trust without overburdening retailers or reducing product availability. To promote a balanced approach, our priority is to:

- Support clear, reasonable consumer protection standards that prevent deceptive practices without imposing unnecessary costs on retailers.
- Advocate for flexible, business-friendly policies that allow retailers to adapt quickly to customer demands and market changes.
- Oppose overly restrictive consumer protection mandates that increase operational costs and limit retailers' ability to provide affordable, quality products.



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Controlled Substances

Retailers play a key role in ensuring the safe and lawful sale of controlled substances, such as tobacco, vape products, cannabis, and alcohol. Regulations should support responsible retailing without imposing excessive burdens that hinder business operations. To promote a balanced approach, our priority is to:

- Support clear, consistent regulations that ensure the safe sale of controlled substances while recognizing retailers' compliance efforts.
- Advocate for standardized state guidelines that streamline compliance and simplify the regulatory landscape for multi-state retailers.
- Oppose excessive restrictions or mandates that increase costs, complicate compliance, and limit retailers' ability to serve customers responsibly.

Fair Enforcement & Regulation

Expanding private rights of action (PRAs) leads to costly and unjust lawsuits, creating a grey-market industry for litigation that exploits businesses rather than protecting consumers or workers. To ensure fair enforcement practices, our priority will be to:

- Support reasonable state agency enforcement as a balanced and transparent alternative to PRAs.
- Advocate for solutions that prioritize reasonable agency oversight and include "right-to-cure" timelines, allowing retailers to address issues before facing litigation.
- Oppose new PRA provisions in employment and data privacy laws that encourage unnecessary lawsuits, raise litigation costs, and create legal uncertainties for retailers.