WASHINGTON RETAIL ASSOCIATION

THE RETAIL ADVANTAGE

A GUIDE TO MEMBERSHIP

About Washington Retail Association

Founded in 1987, the Washington Retail Association (WR) has grown into one of the most influential and respected voices for retail both in Washington state and across the nation. Our membership is as diverse as the communities we serve, representing everything from global retail brands and regional chains to independent stores, wholesalers, and service providers.

Headquartered in the heart of the State Capitol in Olympia, WR leverages deep policy expertise, trusted relationships, and decades of advocacy experience to shape legislation and drive meaningful outcomes for retailers of all sizes.

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Meet Our Team

Jan Himebaugh
President & CEO

Crystal Leatherman
Director of Policy and Government Affairs

Kathie Davies
Senior Legislative Assistant

Darren Gibbs
Finance Manager

John Engber
Director, Retail Industry Coalition of Seattle

Amber Carter
Contract Lobbyist

Championing Retail. Driving Results.

As the leading voice of retail in Washington State, the Washington Retail Association unites retailers of every size and sector — from local small businesses to national and global brands — to protect, strengthen, and advance the industry we all rely on.

We are relentless advocates at every level of government, driving policy, shaping legislation, and defending the interests of our members. Beyond advocacy, we deliver real value through trusted programs, strategic insights, and essential resources that empower retailers to thrive in a fast-moving market.

Legislative Defense

We monitor hundreds of bills annually to block harmful regulations and taxes before they impact your bottom line.

Policy Influence

We build relationships with lawmakers and regulatory agencies to shape retail-friendly policies.

Member Empowerment

We keep you informed, engaged, and represented.

Data-Driven Advocacy

We leverage robust data and research to reinforce retail as Washington's leading economic engine.

Collaborative Alliances

We partner with business coalitions to amplify retail's voice and drive coordinated action.

Together, we are shaping the future of retail in Washington.

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A Membership That Works For You

Government Relations & Advocacy

Lobbying Representation

Amplify your voice and protect retail interest with our expert lobbying - saving you time, money and effort.

Direct Input on Rulemaking

Shape the regulations that impact your business through strategic, well-timed feedback at the most critical points in the rulemaking process.

Influence Policy

Play an active play role in guiding legislative priorities and crafting proposals that support the retail community

Build Key Relationships

Leverage our established network of lawmaker, regulators and key decision makers to amplify and accelerate your advocacy efforts.

Stay Informed

Get real time legislative alerts and straightforward summaries of proposed laws impacting retailers

Advocacy Tools & Guidance

Turn your voice into action with step-by-step resources and tools to help you engage effectively with policymakers.

Research & Insights

In-depth Policy Analysis

Get clear, timely insights on legislative and regulatory issues that impact your business.

Retail Theft & Public Safety Data

Access up-to-date information on crime trends and prevention strategies to protect your operations.

Economic Impact Reports

Understand retail's role in Washington's economy with state and national data at your fingertips.

Industry Trends & Policy Outlook

Stay ahead of shifts in retail and public policy through intelligence from WR and national partners.

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Networks, Coalitions & Partnerships

Coalition Building

Collaborate with other retailers, industry peers, and associations to advance shared priorities and strengthen the retail voice.

Engage Public/Private Partnerships

Join the Attorney General's Organized Retail Crime Task Force as a private sector partner to protect businesses and communities.

State & Federal Connections

Leverage our strong relationships with national organizations* to stay connected and informed on broader retail issues.

**NRF – National Retail Federation*
RILA – Retail Industry Leaders Association
CSRA – Council of State Retail Associations

Policy & Government Affairs Committee Access

Participate in regular policy- focused workgroups to influence decision-making, share expertise, and stay ahead of emerging challenges.

Education & Workforce Support

Rise Up Retail Training

Provide your team with access to the nationally recognized Rise Up curriculum, offering essential retail skills and career development opportunities.

Workforce Advocacy & Resources

Benefit from WR's efforts to advance workforce development initiatives and access resources that help strengthen retail talent pipelines at the local and state level.

Workshops & Briefings

Engage in educational sessions, workshops, and informational briefings designed to keep your business informed and competitive.

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Member Services & Exclusive Access

Communications & Alerts

Stay informed with our newsletters and action alerts, providing timely policy updates, legal insights, and issue tracking - delivered regularly to your inbox.

Exclusive Regulatory Resources

Access our Legislative Law Review and Voting Record to review session outcomes and understand how lawmakers voted on key retail issues.

Compliance Support

Receive guidance to navigate evolving regulations and maintain compliance with confidence.

Retro Auto & Retail Group Programs

Enroll in a workers' compensation group retrospective rating program designed to reward employers committed to workplace safety.

401(k) Retirement Plan

Take advantage of our multiple-employer retirement plan tailored specifically for the retail industry.

PAC Engagement

Support local, state, and federal pro-retail candidates and strengthen your voice through our Political Action Committee.

Direct Liaison Role

Leverage our team as your bridge to local and state officials for effective communication and representation.

Events & Member Recognition

Retail Legislative Reception

Join exclusive networking events that connect you with legislators and key stakeholders in retail policy.

Coordinated Legislative Meetings

Participate in organized advocacy days, legislative briefings, and retail store tours to make your voice heard.

Showcasing Supporters

Whether a major brand or local retailer, we help share your story as a vital part of Washington's retail community.

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What Our Members Are Saying

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"As someone who represents hundreds of retailers through Brookfield Properties at Alderwood and Westlake Center, I see every day how vital it is to have a strong, unified voice in Olympia. Washington Retail has been that voice—bringing together businesses of all sizes to tackle challenges like organized retail crime, public safety, and the policies that impact our ability to operate. What I value most is WR's collaborative approach: they listen, engage directly with decision-makers, and ensure retailers are part of the solution. Their work helps keep Washington a place where retail can grow and thrive"

— Jerry Irwin, Senior General Manager, Brookfield Properties

"As a small business owner, I truly value how dedicated WR is to stand up for retailers of every size across Washington. They monitor both local and state issues, engage directly with legislators, and make sure small business voices are heard. Their proactive approach, clear communication, and practical guidance help create a fair business environment where retailers like mine can thrive."

— Ruthann Goularte, Owner, Drees

"North 40 Outfitters has found WR to be a trusted and essential partner for navigating the challenges of doing business in Washington. WR provides timely legislative updates, quick policy support, and helps businesses build consensus and strategies for a stronger business environment. Through its retrospective rating program, we've emphasized workplace safety, saved on workers' comp premiums, and even earned refunds—making our membership a win for our company, employees, customers, and communities."

— Curtis Wike, Vice President, North 40 Outfitters

Advocacy with Results

$100 Million in Public Safety Funding

When public safety concerns and organized retail crime escalated across Washington, WR made addressing these issues a top advocacy priority. WR engaged early by building bipartisan relationships, collaborating with key stakeholders, and shaping legislation to deliver meaningful solutions for retailers and communities.

Through testimony, coalition-building, and direct engagement with lawmakers, WR helped evolve early proposals into HB 2015, a landmark public safety bill creating $100 million in grants to support law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and community-based safety programs. The legislation also empowers local governments with sustainable funding options to enhance long-term safety.

The passage of HB 2015 demonstrates WR's effectiveness in turning advocacy into action by delivering tangible results that strengthen communities, protect retailers, and ensure safer places to work and shop.

WR former CEO, Renée Sunde with Governor Bob Ferguson at the signing of HB 2015.

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Advocacy in Action

Shaping the Future of AI Policy in Washington

As artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a transformative issue for businesses and consumers alike, the WR recognized the need to ensure new laws balanced innovation, consumer protection, and business practicality.

WR secured a retail industry–specific seat on the Washington State Attorney General's AI Task Force, one of only 19 members statewide, establishing the retail industry as a key voice in one of Washington's most influential technology policy discussions.

Since joining the taskforce, WR was elected by peers to the Task Force Executive Committee and co-chairs several key subcommittees including Labor & Employment, Public Safety, and Consumer Protection & AI Governance.

Through early engagement and consistent leadership, WR has become recognized as a trusted voice in AI policy, ensuring the retail industry maintains a key role in shaping current and future AI legislation.

WR Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Crystal Leatherman, attends the bill signing for SB 5838.

Advocacy with Results

Elevating & Celebrating Retail Careers

As the second largest private-sector employer in Washington State, retail is essential to job creation, local economic vitality, and lifelong career growth. Yet, retail careers are often misunderstood or undervalued, creating challenges in attracting and retaining talent.

To change that narrative, WR has championed the annual designation of September as Careers in Retail Month in partnership with the Governor's office. This statewide recognition serves as a platform to celebrate retail employees, strengthen partnerships between industry and educators, and promote retail as a career of choice for Washingtonians.

WR also works closely with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to highlight the diverse and rewarding career paths in retail--from entry-level positions to management and entrepreneurship. Through direct advocacy, testimony, and coalition-building, WR has secured the passage of two bills advancing retail workforce training, with statewide reports delivered in 2023 and 2025.

WR former State and Local Government Affairs Associate, Rose Gundersen, and former Director for the Washington Department of Commerce, Joe Nguyễn.

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Advocacy with Results

Safeguarding Retailer and Consumer Choice

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***WR Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Crystal Leatherman, and Washington State Senator Perry Dozier* (R-16).**

When a package of bills was introduced that would have reclassified gift cards as unclaimed property and increased the mandatory cash-out threshold from $5 to $50, Washington retailers faced the prospect of new compliance burdens, financial losses, and consumer confusion. These proposals threatened to upend long-standing business practices and disrupt the convenience and flexibility that gift cards provide to millions of customers.

Recognizing the serious implications, WR quickly organized and led a broad coalition of retailers, business associations, and industry partners to oppose the legislation. WR engaged lawmakers early by educating them on how gift cards operate, the consumer protections already in place, and the unintended consequences of dramatically raising the cash-out limit. Through coordinated testimony, data-driven analysis, and direct outreach, WR and coalition partners showed how the proposed legislation would do more harm than good for both businesses and consumers.

The result was a decisive win: the bills were stopped, preserving Washington's stable, consumer-friendly gift card system and preventing costly disruptions for both retailers and customers.

Advocacy in Action

Representing Retailers on Employment Regulations

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WR Contract Lobbyist, Amber Carter, testifies in front of the Washington State House Finance Committee.

Washington's employment regulations and payroll expenses are among the most complex and costly in the nation. That's why WR works year-round with leading employment law experts to advocate before policymakers for practical, balanced policies that protect retailers' interests and reduce compliance burdens.

WR also represents the broader business community on two key state committees—the Paid Family and Medical Leave Advisory Committee with the Employment Security Department and the Retro Advisory Committee with the Department of Labor & Industries. These agencies oversee programs that directly influence payroll costs, labor standards, and workplace safety issues with significant financial and operational impacts for employers statewide. WR ensures agencies and stakeholders understand the real-world impact of new laws and regulations on employers.

Members benefit from timely legislative updates, clear guidance on new rules, and opportunities to shape proposals before they take effect—helping retailers stay compliant, informed, and influential.

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State Partners

NFIB

NORTHWEST MARINE TRADE ASSOCIATION

NWACA
Northwest AUTO CARE ALLIANCE

PROJECT 42

WASHINGTON BUSINESS WBPA PROPERTIES ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME ASSOCIATION

WCCE

WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER
Improving lives through market solutions

Washington Research Council

WSIADA

National Partners

NRF NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION

RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION

THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ICSC
INNOVATING COMMERCE SERVING COMMUNITIES

COUNCIL OF StateRetail ASSOCIATIONS

FMI THE FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

iFA INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION

UWC

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