



# Washington State Council on Aging

**Meeting Title:** 2024 November Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

**Date:** 11/19/2024

**Location:** Zoom

	Members Present	Appointment		Members Present	Appointment
✓	Jean Kindem	At-Large East		Vacant	Association of Counties
	Gavin Carmichael	AAADSW WA Advisory Council	✓	Susan Conniry	O3A Advisory Council
	Rep. Kelly Chambers (Dianna Hawkins, Leg. Aide)	WA House of Representatives	✓	Dennis Wheeler	Snohomish County AAA
✓	Suone Cotner	At-Large West		Vacant	Kitsap AAA Advisory Council
	Georgiann Dustin	NWRC Advisory Council		Vacant	Yakama Golden Eagle Advisory Council
	Deb Murphy	Central AAA		<b>Guests Present</b>	
✓	Eileen McKenzie Sullivan (acting)	Lewis Mason Thurston AAA Advisory Council	✓	Cathy Knight	W4A
✓	Ron Vivion	At-Large West	✓	Walt Bowen	Senior Lobby
	Vacant (Michael Adusah sitting in)	ADS King County Advisory Council	✓	Mary-Anne Grafton	WA Assoc. of Senior Centers
✓	Bob Scarfo	Aging & Long-Term Care Eastern Washington Advisory Council	✓	Susan Engels	ALTSA
	Sen. Karen Keiser (Emma Hellthaler, Leg. Aide)	WA State Senate	✓	Melanie McGuire	ALTSA
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Cameron Akita	ALTSA
✓	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Aging and Long-Term Care			
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives			
✓	Bruce Dougherty	Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources Advisory Board			



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Topic	Key Points and/or Decisions Made
<p>Welcome/Introductions Review/Approve Minutes and Agenda</p>	<p>Chairperson Michele Blythe called the meeting to order at 9:01am. Council Members and guests introduced themselves to the group.</p> <p>Council Members passed a motion to approve the draft agenda and September minutes.</p>
<p>Senior Centers Update</p>	<p>Bruce Dougherty provided an update the Council on two Tacoma Senior Centers facing funding issues.</p> <p>As background, Bruce shared that in February 2020, AARP designated Tacoma as an Age-Friendly city. An Age-Friendly Advisory Group was created with a focus on social participation. Beacon and Lighthouse Senior Centers were listed as important parts of the city’s action plan. The Lighthouse Senior Center provided over 9,000 meals in 2024, and Beacon served over 4,000 in 10-month period.</p> <p>The City of Tacoma issued letters to clients in these Senior Centers noting a planned transition to community centers, which would end meal services currently being offered. This letter highlighted that the transition would enhance activity programs, expand outreach, and improve access via public transportation.</p> <p>The proposed transition away from Senior Centers was discussed in a News Tribune article noting great concern from participants. Many attendees are upset and feel as though the community is being dismantled. Bruce noted that while the city faces a \$20M budget deficit, a petition was underway to oppose this transition. Bruce thanked Mary-Anne Grafton, Chair of the WA State Association of Senior Centers to help organize some of this work.</p> <p><b>Questions/Comments:</b> Mary-Anne Grafton affirmed that this problem has been long-feared and is faced by many communities, such as Marysville, SeaTac, or Phoenix. She also noted that Washington State has fewer Senior Centers compared to the national average.</p>



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<p>Legislative, Outreach, and Advocacy Committee Update</p>	<p>Suone Cotner, Committee Chair, shared the draft Legislative Priorities document with the Council.</p> <p>After revising the introductory language, Suone reviewed the key priorities as Food Security, Case Management Ratios, and Supporting the Work of the JLEC.</p> <p>The second page of SCOA's 2025 Priorities includes ongoing issues: Social Isolation, Senior Center Support, Supporting AL TSA Request Legislation, Supporting the Work of the DAC, and Using Age-Inclusive Language.</p> <p>Ron Vivion motioned to approve the document as discussed. The motion was seconded and approved. Ron advised that this be distributed the first week of January prior to session.</p>
<p>Family and Kinship Caregiver Support Programs</p>	<p><b>Dana Allard-Webb and Rosalyn Alber, AL TSA</b></p> <p>Dana, Family Caregiver Support Program Manager, and Rosalyn, Kinship Care Support Program Manager were introduced to the Council and shared a presentation to help recognize National Family Caregivers Month.</p> <p>Rosalyn discussed the <a href="#">RAISE Act for Family Caregivers</a>. There are over 53 million adults in the U.S. who care for family members. This Act sets 5 goals to support their work, and included below are WA's efforts towards supporting these goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Increase Awareness &amp; Outreach:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Activities planned and in-progress in WA.</li><li>○ Training programs for caregivers, self-care, and service information.</li><li>○ Partnerships with Trualta, Lifespan Respite Coalition, and others.</li><li>○ Spanish-speaking interviews, making TCARE assessments more culturally equitable.</li></ul></li><li>● <b>Advance Partnerships &amp; Engagement:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Evidence-based assessments, kinship caregivers participation in oversight committee.</li><li>○ Increasing awareness of AAAs.</li></ul></li><li>● <b>Strengthen Services &amp; Supports:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Hiring multilingual family caregiver specialists.</li><li>○ Partnering with Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe pilot for tribal family caregivers.</li><li>○ Offering counseling services, support groups.</li></ul></li></ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Free Trualta support groups and chat rooms.</li> <li>○ Enhanced Kinship Care Model to provide case management, pull-down federal funds.</li> <li>● <b>Ensure Financial &amp; Workplace Security:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ WA paid family leave.</li> <li>○ Low-cost or free services via Northwest Justice Project and Columbia Legal.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Expand Data, Research, &amp; EB Practices:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evidence-based status for Kinship Caregiver Support Program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Questions/Comments?</b>          Jean Kindem shared about her daughter’s experience with a caregiver, and how language was a barrier to supporting this individual. Dana noted that AAAs can often help to provide translation services to support these types of situations.</p>
Break	
<p>Partner Update (moved to immediately follow Senior Centers Update)</p>	<p><b>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director</b>          Cathy shared a few perspectives relating to Bruce’s discussion on Tacoma Senior Centers and encouraged those testifying on this issue to have strong written testimony.</p> <p>Cathy noted that there is a very high cost to improving these Senior Centers, having spoken to Pierce County’s AAA Director. Transitioning to a community center model may attract younger older adults, though data would be helpful to support this case. Additionally, many areas are facing budget cuts and there will continue to be tough decisions moving forward.</p> <p>Cathy shared W4A’s <a href="#">Priorities for 2025</a> and requested that those with stories about the local impacts of priority issues send them in.</p> <p>Another AL TSA funding request surrounds WA Cares. Initiative-2124 did not pass but there is still much to plan. AAAs will manage much of the work to identify eligibility, provider networks, and get entry into the system.</p> <p>W4A Days is the first week of February, when the coalition will advocate for funding and meet with Legislators.</p>



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## **Walt Bowen, Senior Lobby President**

Walt shared updates following the Fall Conference in October. Many changes will come from the election; at the state level, there is a new Governor, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, and Public Lands Commissioner. The Governor-elect has a 50-person transition team. Amber Leaders has provided good continuity as policy staff in Governor Inslee's office, which will now move to someone new.

### Notable dates:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December – legislative work sessions, JLEC 12/11.
- Budget forecast doesn't look very good with a shortfall. Inslee provided instructions to agencies.
- Lobby day – looking forward to having SCOA designee to present priorities on Jan 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 105-day session Jan, Jan 13<sup>th</sup> inaugural ball first since COVID. Some construction on campus.
- Feb 20<sup>th</sup> – Senior Lobby Day, then priority during session is budget proviso to re-establish JLEC.
- Hilke Faber, the first Ombuds in the state, worked in King County, started resident council there recently passed away. Walt expressed how she pioneered this work in Washington.

## **Cathy MacCaul, Advocacy Director – AARP WA**

Cathy expressed how wonderful Hilke Faber was and shared remembrance for her.

Cathy thanked all the individuals who helped educate people about the LTC system as it relates to Initiative 2124.

### AARP Legislative Priorities include:

1. Supporting family caregivers – improve FMLA; move legislation to improve quality of memory care units.
2. Financial Security – working to seat advisory board for WA Savers Program (small business retirement); working on fraud awareness as new governor has consumer protection focus.
3. Senior Nutrition



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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. JLEC</li><li>5. LTC Ombudsman Program</li></ol> <p>Cathy shared her insights on the closing of Senior Centers in Tacoma, which seemed counter to Age-Friendly efforts. A city council meeting is scheduled for later in the day as well as a public comment period.</p> <p>Bruce Dougherty asked if Walt could provide clarification on resident council in Washington State. Walt shared that in the 1970s, there were very few home and community-based supports for long-term care needs. Facilities had less regulation for abuse/neglect as well as little training for nursing aides. Hilke Faber was instrumental in establishing resident councils to advocate for change. She helped develop bills to support better training, a LTCOP, and higher reimbursement rates.</p>
AL TSA Update	<p><b>Susan Engels, State Unit on Aging Office Chief</b></p> <p>Susan thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and updated the group on a change in the Deputy Director position within the HCS Division.</p> <p><b>Budget</b></p> <p>Susan reviewed the message that came down from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) anticipating a \$10-12 billion shortfall over the next 4 years. The State would need to take measures to address the shortfall, which is in part due to caseload growth. DSHS has instituted freezes on hiring, some contracting, travel, and new equipment. Exemptions will support hiring of essential staff and implementing client services contracts.</p> <p>There is uncertainty around some budget requests including Multi-Sector Plan funding. A summit may still move forward later in 2025. This request also included funding to support work for a Senior Center landscape survey.</p> <p>OFM requested that agencies submit proposals to trim their budgets. AL TSA is reviewing issues currently, and advocacy from partner organizations will be important moving other funding requests through.</p>



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	<p><b>Questions/Comments?</b>          Bruce asked for clarity on how essential staff were designated. Susan shared that social workers and financial workers were included—while there is not a set definition for essential worker, it generally applies to positions that impact the public and are crucial for their welfare.</p>	
JLEC Reminder	<p>Ron Vivion shared how to access the <a href="#">JLEC webpage</a>. He reviewed the agenda for the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, and noted that a <a href="#">recording would be available on TVW</a>.</p>	
New Business/Public Comment	<p>Cathy Knight updated the Council on a USAging meeting, an organization representing AAAs nationally. Cathy noted that there was difficulty identifying new staff from the incoming administration who will be the point of contact for aging issues. Other items of note are building on a National Plan on Aging, planning for a 2025 White House Conference on Aging, and reauthorizing the OAA.</p> <p>Michele Blythe called for members to bring ideas for speakers to the next meeting in January.</p> <p>Ron noted that he would draft a letter to the Governor-elect, similar to past SCOA letters, and share out to the Council for review/comment.</p> <p>Meeting adjourned at 11:33AM.</p>	
<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>		
Send Leg Priorities/letter to 2025 State Leg.	<b>Assignee</b> Cameron Akita	<b>Due Date</b> Early January
Finalize letter to Governor-elect	Ron Vivion and Council	ASAP
Send Governor's letter	Cameron Akita	January