



# Washington State Council on Aging

**Meeting Title:** 2025 February Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

**Date:** 2/25/2025

**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
✓	Suone Cotner	At-Large West	✓	Dennis Wheeler	Snohomish County AAA
✓	Georgiann Dustin	NWRC Advisory Council		Vacant	Kitsap AAA Advisory Council
	Vacant	Central AAA		Vacant	Yakama Golden Eagle Advisory Council
✓	Glen Harper (acting)	Lewis Mason Thurston AAA Advisory Council		<b>Guests Present</b>	
✓	Ron Vivion	At-Large West	✓	Cathy Knight	W4A
	Vacant	ADS King County Advisory Council	✓	Walt Bowen	Senior Lobby
✓	Bob Scarfo	Aging & Long-Term Care Eastern Washington Advisory Council	✓	Mary-Anne Grafton	WA Assoc. of Senior Centers
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Melanie McGuire	ALTSA
	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Aging and Long-Term Care	✓	Cameron Akita	ALTSA
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives	✓	Mike Anbesse	ALTSA
✓	Bruce Dougherty	Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources Advisory Board	✓	Cathy MacCaul	AARP
✓	Martha Raske	At-Large East			



## Washington State Council on Aging

Topic	Key Points and/or Decisions Made
Welcome/Introductions Review/Approve Minutes and Agenda	<p>Chairperson Michele Blythe called the meeting to order at 9:02am and welcomed attendees.</p> <p>Council Members passed a motion to approve the draft agenda and January meeting minutes.</p> <p>Bob Scarfo provided a brief update from Eastern Washington, noting Dementia Friendly work is starting to ramp up.</p> <p>Susan Conniry expressed the concerns about challenges in getting food into local food banks and senior centers in coastal Washington.</p>
Partner Updates	<p><b>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director</b></p> <p>Cathy updated the Council on a W4A legislative email from the previous weekend which highlighted nutrition funding. Governor Inslee's budget put in \$28M for Senior Nutrition. W4A is coordinating with Kate White-Tudor to develop a sign-on letter for member organizations to tell the legislature this funding is necessary. An advocacy alert is also in the works.</p> <p>Other budget considerations – Governor Ferguson's priorities are more fiscally conservative. As a part of the budget exercise, ALTSA is putting forward Medicaid eligibility reductions, but it is not yet known how many people this could affect. Proposals get sent to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for review. Eligibility cuts are more targeted than they had been during the Great Recession, and may target those with fewer ADL needs, for example.</p> <p>Cathy shared there is an updated version of the dementia pilot one-pager, which she will distribute.</p> <p>Governor's Budget – Gov. Ferguson does not want to raise revenues despite the advocacy from many organizations. The legislature will also develop their own budget proposals.</p> <p>Federal update – the House is working on legislation to severely hamper Medicaid, which may affect the FMAP (matching percentage between Federal and State governments).</p>



## Washington State Council on Aging

Georgiann Dustin asked if the sign-on letter would be appropriate to take to the local Advisory Council. Cathy shared that in addition to local Advisory Councils, the letter is for nutrition contractors and Senior Centers as well.

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

Walt expressed both the challenges of following Cathy's presentation and with the current budget environment. The next cutoff is February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Senior Lobby updates - Walt shared that Bob LeRoy, Vice-President of the Senior Lobby is retiring. Kaiser Permanente Washington is being added as a new member organization.

Walt noted that the Traffic Safety Council is taking new applicants.

Walt is attending a couple meetings a week to get updates on the state of Social Security. There are 1.6M people in Washington state receiving Social Security benefits.

Walt noted that personal data at the federal level is being broken into following a model from Hungary. This may work to turn public assets into private entities.

There are many barriers to communication with federal entities at the moment in addition to many layoffs, putting a strain on services.

The next Senior Lobby meeting is March 17<sup>th</sup>.

Cathy Knight shared about coordinating an emergency planning event with ACL and FEMA; FEMA had to pull out and the event moved to being voluntary. Walt expressed that threats to FEMA's ability to operate may put more stress on the state's National Guard in emergency responses.

Cathy also updated the Council (on Cathy MacCaul's behalf) about the change for WA Cares to use a market-based approach with its funds. Individuals can sign on to support this legislation as well.



## Washington State Council on Aging

### ALTSA Update

#### **Mike Anbesse, Deputy Assistant Secretary, ALTSA**

Mike expressed thanks to the Council for the opportunity to speak and apologies for missing the last meeting.

ALTSA is monitoring significant changes at state and federal levels, awaiting the governor's budget to determine impacts. Final decisions rest with the Legislature.

ALTSA operates across 5 divisions with the largest budget allocated to HCS. ALTSA is addressing backlogs in regulatory components for RCS/APS and staffing and exploring budget exercises to maintain services and possibly consolidate units. The focus is on efficiency with limited resources while serving ~97,000 clients monthly via 2,700 employees and 7,800 direct care workers statewide.

Suone raised concerns about regulatory oversight of for-profit Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) potentially evicting Medicaid clients. She proposed examining requirements to ensure such facilities serve Medicaid clients and prevent evictions.

Mike noted the complexities of this oversight, such as barriers to ALF entry (\$500K costs) and challenges with Medicaid contracts. While technically discharges due to Medicaid transitions are not permissible, some ALFs bypass this by hospitalizing clients and ALTSA will investigate. Ombudsman also bring up this issue, though Medicaid contracts for ALFs remain an issue. The State Ombuds is working on discharge rights for LTC clients, which is an issue to address.

Suone also raised concern over licensing requirements for ALFs, asking if Medicaid acceptance is mandatory for licensing. Mike shared that Medicaid acceptance is not required for licensing. Primary challenges arise after clients deplete their funds, leading to re-assessments and potential discharges. Tracking is possible, with a noted 40-50% increase in facilities recently, driven by market demands. Occupancy rates hover between 40-60% which generate revenue. Collaboration with organizations is needed to better protect individuals. Suone expressed eagerness to support this effort.

Bruce Dougherty asked about the impacts of hiring freezes at ALTSA. Mike noted that essential employees are unaffected by hiring freezes. Bruce also asked if ALTSA rehires former employees, referencing Alaska's retire/rehire model. ALTSA does rehire previous employees, including on-call



## Washington State Council on Aging

	<p>staff, and continues to provide benefits. While training remains challenging, rehiring is feasible for approximately 20 hours/week. Employees must take a one-month break before rehiring. This approach is welcomed.</p>
Legislative/Outreach/Advocacy Committee	<p>Suone Cotner updated the Council on actions of the Committee.</p> <p>SCOA's legislative priorities and budget letter were distributed. She noted the discussion to support W4A's sign-on letter. Suone shared that Grace Huang was identified as the point of contact from the Governor's policy team for Aging issues.</p> <p>Ron noted a budget proviso is needed to advance the JLEC group, though constraints may arise. Walt highlighted there is a sponsor for JLEC's continuation and shares comments from SCOA with legislators. Rep. Tharinger (House Appropriations) is the main POC and supported by Speaker Jenkins.</p> <p>Suone encourage Council Members to sign up for W4A's action alerts. Michele Blythe commented on Suone's active involvement in advocating and educating individuals about SCOA.</p>
Open Discussion	<p>Michele Blythe opened up conversation around potential future speakers for SCOA meetings, including Senator Muzzall. Ron Vivion suggested a presentation from a non-profit Parkinson's organization for March.</p> <p>Bruce shared about a webinar on SNFs (Skilled Nursing Facilities) he attended. It reviewed corporate structures that siphon off revenues, creating misleadingly slim margins. Bruce suggested sharing the webinar link with the group and potentially inviting a speaker to address reimbursement rates.</p> <p>Georgiann asked for confirmation that letters sent to Lt. Governor Heck and the Governor, including an invitation. Michele confirmed these were sent.</p> <p>Bruce announced his final Pierce County Advisory Council (AC) would be in April and expressed interest in applying for an at-large seat. There is another AC member interested in filling the vacancy.</p> <p>Bob Scarfo discussed Spokane parks board challenges, including aging, obesity, and climate change. The status quo planning and lack of mechanisms for rapid change in the 10-year plan is not sufficient.</p>



## Washington State Council on Aging

	<p>He highlighted underserved groups (e.g., individuals with Dementia, Autism) and the need for redefining priorities like the Memory Garden. Suggested using “first-time events” language to drive change but noted limitations due to the parks board’s autonomy under the city charter.</p> <p>Ron welcomed Martha Raske (Eastern at-large applicant) and Glenn Harper (Senior Lobby involvement) to the meeting. Ron also proposed adopting age-inclusive language to replace “senior,” citing its impact on self-perception among older adults.</p> <p>Glenn Harper introduced himself to the Council as the LMTAAA Advisory Council member replacing Eileen McKenzieSullivan. He shared that he runs a non-profit and expressed interest in contributing to the group.</p>		
New Business/Public Comment	<p>Georgiann expressed interest in gathering a group of individuals to tour a new Senior Center in Whatcom County. She planned to provide outreach at a later date.</p> <p>Council adjourned at 10:57am.</p>		
ACTION ITEMS		Assignee	Due Date