

Chapter 43.290 RCW
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND PROTOCOL

Sections

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RCW 43.290.005 Finding—Purpose. The legislature finds that it is in the public interest to create an office of international relations and protocol in order to: Make international relations and protocol a broad-based, focused, and functional part of state government; develop and promote state policies that increase international literacy and cross-cultural understanding among Washington state's citizens; expand Washington state's international cooperation role in such areas as the environment, education, science, culture, and sports; establish coordinated methods for responding to the increasing number of inquiries by foreign governments and institutions seeking cooperative activities within Washington state; provide leadership in state government on international relations and assistance to the legislature and state elected officials on international issues affecting the state; assist with multistate international efforts; and coordinate and improve communication and resource sharing among various state offices, agencies, and educational institutions with international programs.

It is the purpose of this chapter to bring these functions together in a new office under the office of the governor in order to establish a visible, coordinated, and comprehensive approach to international relations and protocol. [1991 c 24 s 1.]

Transfer of authority—1991 c 24: "All powers, duties, and functions of the office of international relations and protocol in the department of trade and economic development are transferred to the office of international relations and protocol under the office of the governor." [1991 c 24 s 8.]

RCW 43.290.010 Office created. The office of international relations and protocol is created under the office of the governor. The office shall serve as the state's official liaison and protocol office with foreign governments. The governor shall appoint a director of the office of international relations and protocol, who shall serve at the pleasure of the governor. Because of the diplomatic character of this office, the director and staff will be exempt from the provisions of chapter 41.06 RCW. The director will be paid a salary to be fixed by the governor in accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.03.040. The director may hire such personnel as may be necessary for the general administration of the office. To the extent permitted by law, state agencies may temporarily loan staff to the office of international relations and protocol to assist in carrying out the

office's duties and responsibilities under this chapter. An arrangement to temporarily loan staff must have the approval of the staff members to be loaned and the directors of the office and the agencies involved in the loan. [1991 c 24 s 2.]

RCW 43.290.015 Duties. The office of international relations and protocol shall:

(1) Advise and assist the governor, the legislature, and other independently elected officials on international developments that may affect the state;

(2) Establish and build government-to-government relationships between the state, foreign governments, and international organizations;

(3) Coordinate protocol for foreign dignitaries visiting the governor, the legislature, the judiciary, and other state agencies and offices, including the appropriate criteria and procedures for the signing of bilateral agreements by the governor on behalf of the state of Washington;

(4) Advise, coordinate, and support engagement between the state, foreign governments, and international partners;

(5) Establish, in coordination with the office of the premier of British Columbia, an intergovernmental exchange between the state and British Columbia, cochaired by the governor and the premier of British Columbia or their designees, concerning issues of mutual interests;

(6) Designate an international engagement advisory committee to leverage the expertise of the state's international engagement community;

(7) Assist institutions of higher education in implementing programs for international cooperation and student exchange; and

(8) Improve coordination between state government and the Washington tourism marketing authority. [2024 c 336 s 5.]

RCW 43.290.020 Authority of office. The office of international relations and protocol may:

(1) Create advisory committees as necessary to execute its responsibilities. The duration and composition of such advisory committees may be determined by the office. Advisory committee representation may include statewide elected officials from the executive branch, or their designees, as well as representatives of the legislative branch and the judiciary. Representation may also include external organizations such as world affairs councils, public ports, world trade organizations, associate development organizations, business and civic organizations, consular officials, executive and small cabinet agencies, institutions of higher education, immigration and labor organizations, public ports, state offices, and private and nonprofit organizations. The governor, or the governor's designee, shall chair such advisory committees;

(2) In conjunction with the legislative committee on economic development and international relations, designate foreign jurisdictions, such as national governments, subnational governments, and international organizations, as jurisdictions of strategic importance to Washington;

(3) Establish procedures and requirements for operations and expenditures to support and enhance state government partnership and relationships with foreign jurisdictions, particularly those

identified as of strategic importance. Such operations and expenditures are intended to strengthen state agency economic development and policy cooperation, enable the implementation of the strategic international engagement plan, as determined by the director, and provide resources for government-to-government engagement, as well as support of inbound and outbound delegations to and from Washington state;

(4) Accept or request grants or gifts from citizens and other private sources to be used to defray the costs of appropriate hosting of foreign dignitaries, including appropriate gift-giving and reciprocal gift-giving, or other activities of the office. The office shall open and maintain a bank account into which it shall deposit all money received under this subsection. Such money and the interest accruing thereon shall not constitute public funds, shall be kept segregated and apart from funds of the state, and shall not be subject to appropriation or allotment by the state or subject to chapter 43.88 RCW. [2024 c 336 s 3; 1991 c 24 s 4.]

RCW 43.290.030 Strategic international engagement plan. (1) The office of international relations and protocol shall develop a strategic international engagement plan to guide Washington's international economic development and engagement consistent with RCW 43.290.005. The plan must create a common framework for the state's engagement in international activities, to include: Trade missions, economic development, and interpersonal knowledge, educational, and cultural exchanges.

(2) The office may consult with entities relevant to Washington's international presence when developing the strategic plan, including: Associate development organizations, business and civic organizations, consular officials, executive and small cabinet agencies, institutions of higher education, immigration and labor organizations, public ports, state offices, state ethnic commissions, and private and nonprofit organizations.

(3) The office may utilize the resources of Results Washington for technical and operational assistance in developing the strategic plan.

(4) The office must complete an initial strategic plan by July 1, 2025. This strategic plan shall undergo periodic review to measure progress and outcomes at least every two and a half years thereafter, and it shall be fully updated at least every five years thereafter. [2024 c 336 s 1.]

RCW 43.290.040 Identification of countries of strategic importance for international trade relations. (1) The office of international relations and protocol and the legislative committee on economic development and international relations, in consultation with the department of commerce, the department of agriculture, the office of the secretary of state, and other state agencies and offices as appropriate, shall jointly identify up to 15 foreign jurisdictions that are of strategic importance to the development and diversification of Washington's international trade relations.

(2) When designating such jurisdictions of strategic importance, the office and committee shall consider factors including:

- (a) Existing or potential partnerships in key industrial sectors;
- (b) The presence of cultural and people-to-people ties;

(c) The state's economic development priorities and shared interests, consistent with the state strategic international engagement plan;

(d) The presence of international trade offices or other program-based engagement conducted by state agencies; and

(e) Historic or existing bilateral agreements established on a government-to-government basis.

(3) A foreign jurisdiction may not be designated as a jurisdiction of strategic importance under this section if it is currently subject to United States government sanctions for and has been identified by the United States department of state as being engaged in state-sponsored terrorism. [2024 c 336 s 4; 2023 c 470 s 2081; 1996 c 253 s 303. Formerly RCW 43.330.065.]

Explanatory statement—2023 c 470: See note following RCW 10.99.030.

Findings—Purpose—Severability—Part headings not law—1996 c 253: See notes following RCW 28B.109.010.

RCW 43.290.900 Effective date—1991 c 24. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1991. [1991 c 24 s 15.]