



**BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.**  
***Building Economic Resilience & Preparedness in Washington's Communities***  
**2026 WEDA WINTER CONFERENCE**

Saint Martin's University & the Governor's Mansion – Legislative Reception

*preliminary Agenda as of 1/21/2026 12:37 PM*

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026**

7:00 pm                      **Informal No-Host Pre-Conference Dinner** – Brewery City Pizza, Lacey

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

9:30 - 11:00 am            **WEDA Q1 2026 Board Meeting** – *Board Members & WEDA Staff only* (Capital Room, Hampton Inn & Suites Olympia/Lacey)

11:30 am - 12:00 pm      **Conference Registration Opens** (Norman Worthington Conference Center, Saint Martin's University, Lacey)

12:00 - 12:30 pm           **Buffet Lunch & Interactive Networking** (Norman Worthington Conference Center)

**Welcome and Introductions:** Gina Stark, CEO, Stark Impact Consulting & WEDA Board Chair

12:30 - 1:00 pm            **Opening General Session**

**Land Acknowledgement &  
Tribal Welcome:** Cheebo Frazier, Vice Chairwoman, Nisqually Indian Tribal Council

Remarks from WEDA Leadership & Sponsors

1:00 - 1:40 pm            **BUILD STRONG: *How Can We Build Economic Resilience & Preparedness in Our Communities?***

**Keynote Speaker:** Aaron Davis, Deputy Executive Director, BuildStrong America

1:40 - 2:30 pm            **Fireside Chat: *Resources, Best Practices & Reflections on How We Should BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.***

**Featured Panelists:**

- Robert Ezelle, Director, Emergency Management Division, Washington Military Department
- US Small Business Administration (SBA) Pacific Northwest Region Administrator Apollo Fuhrman
- *Additional Panelists TBA*

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|----------------|---|
| 2:30 - 2:45 pm | <b>Snack Break</b>  |
| 3:00 - 4:30 pm | <b>WEDA 2026 Economic Development Awards Ceremony</b><br><b><i>Honoring Outstanding Achievement in Economic Development</i></b><br><i>All nominees will be recognized and brief presentations will be given by award winners.</i> |
| 5:30 - 7:00 pm | <b>WEDA Legislative Reception</b> (Governor's Mansion)<br><br><b>Featured Speaker TBA</b>   |
| 7:30 pm        | <b>BUILD STRONG: Emerging Leaders Get Together</b> (Ricardo's Kitchen + Bar, The Fireside room, 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey)   |
| 8:00 – 9:30 pm | <b>STAY STRONG: <i>Building Partnerships &amp; Friendships, Old &amp; New: After Hours No-Host Get Together</i></b> (Ricardo's Kitchen + Bar, The Fireside room, 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey)                              |

#### **Thursday, February 26, 2026**

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| 8:00 am             | <b>Conference Registration Opens</b> (Norman Worthington Conference Center, Saint Martin's University, Lacey)  |
| 8:00 - 8:45 am      | <b>Buffet Breakfast &amp; Interactive Networking</b> (Norman Worthington Conference Center)  |
| 8:45 - 9:30 am      | <b>Morning General Session: <i>Building Washington's Economic Resilience</i></b><br><br><b>Keynote Speaker: Washington State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti</b>   |
| 9:30 - 10:30 am     | <b>Washington State Key Industry Sector Partners Panel: <i>Emerging Trends, Innovations &amp; Opportunities for Building Washington's Economic Resilience</i></b><br><br><b>Panelists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joshua Berger, Founder &amp; President/CEO, Maritime Blue</li> <li>• Mel Clark, President &amp; CEO, CleanTech Alliance</li> <li>• Kayla Coffee, CEO &amp; President, Aerospace Futures Alliance</li> <li>• Rhianne Ham, International Marketing Manager, WA State Department of Agriculture</li> <li>• Laura Ruderman, CEO, Technology Alliance</li> </ul>  |
| 10:30 - 11:00 am    | <b>Roundtable Strategic Discussions with Key Commerce Staff &amp; Industry Partners: <i>Building Washington's Economic Opportunities &amp; Resilience</i></b>  |
| 11:00 am - 12:00 pm | <b>Legislative Discussion with WEDA Partners: <i>Building Washington's Economic Opportunities &amp; Resilience through Partnerships &amp; Shared Interests</i></b><br><br><b>Panelists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candice Bock, Director of Government Relations, Association of Washington Cities</li> <li>• William Westmoreland, CEO, PacMountain Workforce Development Council on behalf of Washington Workforce Association</li> <li>• Eric ffitch, Executive Director, Washington Public Ports Association</li> <li>• Kris Johnson, President &amp; CEO, Association of Washington Business</li> <li>• Derek Young, Executive Director, Washington State Association of Counties</li> </ul> |

12:00 - 1:30 pm

**Lunch & Legislative Update: *Responding to the Call for Action As We Work to BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.***

**Legislative Economic Development Leaders Panel**

- House Technology, Economic Development & Veterans Committee Chair Cindy Ryu (D-32<sup>nd</sup> District-NW King & SW Snohomish Counties)
- House Technology, Economic Development & Veterans Ranking Member Stephanie Barnard (R-8<sup>th</sup> District-Tri Cities)
- *Senate Leaders TBA*

**Closing Session: *Our Call for Action* - BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.**

**Featured Speakers TBA**

**Closing Remarks & Action Items**