



## Washington Policy Center's 2012 Recommendations

Washington Policy Center analysts work closely with lawmakers of both parties to develop sound public policy that improves the lives of people in Washington state. In 2011, lawmakers enacted thirteen of WPC's policy ideas into law.

Below are our top policy recommendations for 2012. WPC's professional staff is dedicated to developing proposals based on objective, fact-based research. If a policy idea is not supported by the data, we will not recommend it to state leaders. Our goal is to present constructive, commonsense reforms that serve the public interest.

More information on each policy recommendation, with supporting research, is available in the new 4th edition of our *Policy Guide for Washington State*, or on our website, [www.washingtonpolicy.org](http://www.washingtonpolicy.org).

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### Budget, Taxes, and Open Government

- ▶ Enact a constitutional tax and spending limit (with two-thirds requirement to raise taxes).
- ▶ Enact constitutional legislative transparency reform.
- ▶ Enact constitutional emergency clause reform.
- ▶ Collective bargaining reform: Bring legislature back into the collective bargaining process, as it was prior to the 2002 Civil Service law.
- ▶ Reform competitive contracting: Allow agencies to make contracting more proactive (create a Competitive Contracting Council).
- ▶ Provide the governor discretionary authority to cut spending.
- ▶ Repeal unaffordable programs instead of suspending them.
- ▶ Create a tax transparency website so taxpayers can quickly and easily understand what taxes they pay to all levels of government in Washington.

### Transportation

- ▶ Make congestion relief a statewide policy goal.
- ▶ Enact a constitutional amendment to protect toll revenue for highway purposes.
- ▶ Repeal the state's VMT (vehicle miles traveled) reduction targets.
- ▶ Enact legislation to make Sound Transit's governing body an elected board.

Regarding a possible transportation tax package, WPC recommends that:

- ▶ Taxes and fees paid by drivers should not subsidize other modes of transportation.
- ▶ Do not create a state-level tax or fee to fund local transit agencies.
- ▶ Stop diverting transportation taxes to pay for non-highway purposes.
- ▶ Expand road capacity, fix chokepoints and do not limit new revenues to just maintaining the existing system.

### Education

- ▶ Lift the statewide ban on charter schools.
- ▶ Allow school principals to consider teacher performance in the assignment and layoff of teachers.
- ▶ Include parent input as part of teacher evaluations.
- ▶ Increase accountability by repealing automatic tenure for school principals and teachers.
- ▶ Allow any qualified professional to teach in a public school.

- ▶ Allow merit pay and bonuses for teaching excellence.
- ▶ Allow principals flexibility under collective bargaining agreements to operate schools in the best interest of students, not adults.
- ▶ Provide a Basic Education Grant to every student, with additional funding for special needs students, which goes directly to the student's school to fund classroom instruction.

## Environment

- ▶ Analyze Washington's environmental priorities with a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis of the state's top environmental expenditures.
- ▶ Give school districts the flexibility to make building improvements by removing the costly and ineffective "green" building mandates.
- ▶ Increase vehicle efficiency by changing insurance law to allow private car sharing.
- ▶ Develop a personal incentive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by creating a revenue neutral carbon price and offering investment tax credits to promote creativity and innovation.
- ▶ Avoid imposing a costly mandatory drug take-back program on citizens.

## Small Business Climate

### Workers' Compensation reform

- ▶ Expand worker access to voluntary settlement agreements based on Senate-passed SB 5566.
- ▶ Increase fraud prevention and investigations.

### Unemployment Insurance

- ▶ Tightening enrollment standards for the displaced worker-retraining program.
- ▶ Implement a web-based portal to allow employers access to claims data, including contact information for unemployed workers.

### Regulatory reform

- ▶ Reform and simplify the B&O tax
- ▶ Reduce the burden of regulations by aligning state rules with federal standards.
- ▶ Limit the power of state agencies to impose rules without legislative approval.
- ▶ Implement the State Auditor reports on regulatory reform.
- ▶ Include sunset provisions for all new regulations.

### Mandatory paid sick leave

- ▶ Do not follow Seattle in imposing a statewide paid sick leave requirement.
- ▶ Require business impact statements on regulations like mandatory paid sick leave.

## Health Care

- ▶ Give Washington residents maximum choice in health care by following the flexible Utah model in setting up a state exchange rather than the restrictive Massachusetts approach.
- ▶ Allow low-cost, low-mandate health plans to be offered through the state exchange.
- ▶ Allow Washington residents to purchase health insurance across state lines.

### Individual health insurance market

- ▶ Legalize the sale of mandate-free or mandate-light plans.
- ▶ Allow more competition within the market.

### Opting-out of Medicaid

- ▶ The federal government should turn Medicaid into a block grant program for the states.
- ▶ Implement a voucher program.