



# Memo to Washington's New Governor

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Last week the people of Washington elected a new governor, choosing to maintain one-party control in Olympia. At 32 years, Washington will go the longest of any state continuously served by governors of the Democratic party.

All states need new ideas to move forward, so there is a risk Washington's new top executive will simply follow the well-worn path set by his predecessors, pursuing a pre-set range of policy options deemed acceptable to established interests in Olympia.

The purpose of this memo is to help the governor-elect "think outside the box" and develop bold ideas for solving our state's many pressing problems, especially in the areas of job creation, economic growth, balancing the budget and improving education.

Below are three specific policy recommendations in each of eight policy areas that are most important to the people of our state. The recommendations are followed by page references to the latest edition of Washington Policy Center's *Policy Guide for Washington State*, which provides supporting data and a detailed description. The *Policy Guide* is available online at [policyguide.org](http://policyguide.org). Additional research on each policy recommendation is available at [washingtonpolicy.org](http://washingtonpolicy.org).

These are practical proposals that benefit the people of our state. In recent years lawmakers and voters have enacted 25 policy ideas recommended by Washington Policy Center. This year voters approved all four ballot positions recommended by Washington Policy Center.

Managers work with things as they are. Leaders expand the realm of what can be. These recommendations provide the new governor and other policymakers with the facts and guidance they need to expand what's possible and get a fresh start in solving our state's most urgent problems when the legislature convenes in January.

# Top Policy Recommendations

## Balance the Budget

1. Restore the legislature's ability to amend collective bargaining agreements, and limit collective bargaining to setting wages and benefits (page 23).
2. Adopt a constitutional amendment requiring a two-thirds legislative vote to raise state or local taxes.
3. Create a Competition Council to identify ways to improve public services and save money through competitive contracting out (page 30).

## Help Small Businesses

1. Include a regulatory sunset provision for all new regulations, and submit all existing regulations to review by the legislature every five years (page 199).
2. Adopt a constitutional amendment replacing the complex and burdensome Business and Occupation tax with a simpler, fairer Single Business tax (page 50).
3. End the monopoly unemployment benefit system and allow workers to have individual, portable unemployment accounts (page 213).

## Promote Job Creation

1. End the state monopoly on selling workers' compensation insurance and allow employers to buy worker protection coverage in a competitive private market, as is done in 46 other states (page 245).
2. De-couple automatic minimum wage increases from the Puget Sound-area Consumer Price Index and instead use regional measures of inflation to reflect the true cost of living across the state (page 249).
3. Repeal the never-implemented Paid Family Leave payroll tax program and reject efforts to mandate a one-size-fits-all paid sick leave policy (page 259).

## Reform Education

1. Allow local principals to be true education leaders by putting them in charge of the budget, teacher hiring and the curriculum at their own schools; let principals award merit pay to the best-performing classroom teachers (page 164).
2. Allow pay raises and year-end bonuses for classroom teachers based on how well they educate children, and allow principals to fire ineffective teachers (page 171).
3. Assign a letter grade to schools based on the state's annual Public School Accountability Index so parents are informed about the quality of education their children receive.

## Improve Health Care

1. Reform Medicaid. Ask Congress to let states receive Medicaid funding in the form of flexible block grants, to allow Medicaid recipients to choose vouchers to give them control over their own health care dollars, and strengthen the social safety net by targeting Medicaid eligibility to those who need it most (page 144).
2. Reduce the burden of state mandates and lower the cost of health coverage for individuals and small groups, and maintain access to association health plans (page 134).
3. Enact commonsense tort reforms that lower health care costs, such as capping non-economic jury awards, ending joint and several liability restrictions, and encouraging independent arbitration to resolve medical injury disputes (page 139).

## Promote Open Government

1. Give the public 72 hours' advance notice before any committee holds a public hearing on a bill; ban blank, title-only bills; and make the final version of a bill available on the internet at least 24 hours before a vote on final passage (page 231).
2. Create an independent Open Government Ombudsman to enforce the provisions of the Public Records Act and the Open Public Meetings Act.
3. Require taping of executive committee sessions.

## Protect the Environment

1. Create an Environmental Priorities Council that uses science and economics, not politics, to set priorities for protecting the environment (page 77).
2. Let utilities count all “carbon free” energy sources—like clean hydroelectric power—toward meeting the quotas required by the Initiative 937 law (page 111).
3. End the failed “green schools” mandate that reduces education funding by forcing school districts to spend millions on unnecessary construction and maintenance projects every year (page 82).

## Improve Transportation

1. Constitutionally protect highway toll revenue so it is devoted solely to highway purposes (page 313).
2. Make Sound Transit more accountable to the public by making its governing body a directly elected board (page 317).
3. Respect people's right to mobility by making traffic congestion reduction an official policy goal (page 302).