

SUMMER 2013



Viewpoint

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

Voters vs. the Supreme Court

*Despite being affirmed
five times by voters in
Washington state, the
struggle to limit taxes
continues*

IN OUR INAUGURAL ISSUE

**A Hopeful Step Toward
Nonpartisan Climate Policy**

**WPC Impact on 2013 Legislative
Session**

2012 Annual Report



Viewpoint

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to *Viewpoint*, a new forum for important policy issues in Washington state! At Washington Policy Center, we are always looking for ways to influence the debate and this new publication does just that. *Viewpoint* provides you with solid facts and insightful commentary on the critical policy issues of the day. We look forward to bringing you our latest research and analysis in a vibrant and innovative way each quarter.

A lot is happening in our state in 2013. During this year's legislative session, WPC experts were invited to testify before legislative committees a record 30 times. *Viewpoint* provides a review of what happened on key legislative issues and what it means to you. In our inaugural issue, we examine the debate over the state's two-thirds legislative supermajority requirement to raise taxes (enacted for a fifth time by voters last fall), present our 2012 Annual Report, and present an exciting development on environmental policy that was the result of our work this year. WPC's first-rate team of policy experts is working tirelessly to keep you informed about the latest issues that will affect your life, your family and your community.

We invite you to share this and future *Viewpoint* issues with your friends and family and at your office. Thank you for your support of our work!

Very truly yours,



Dann Mead Smith
President

Viewpoint is the quarterly magazine of Washington Policy Center, an independent Washington state-focused think tank.

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Dann Mead Smith

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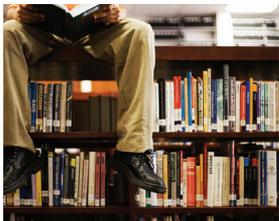
Vice President for Research
Paul Guppy





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By Jason Mercier and Chris Cargill



IMPACT

Following WPC's recommendation, on May 7, Governor Inslee signed SB 5496 authorizing approval of online school programs in private schools. Liv Finne, WPC Education director, stands second from left.



Carson. Walker. Cupp. (Dinner.)

LIKE NONE BEFORE, *Washington Policy Center's 2013 Annual Dinner lineup in Seattle and Spokane on September 5th features some of the country's biggest names.*

The Seattle event has already sold out, but there are still a limited number of seats remaining to participate in the Eastern Washington gala dinner.

ARE YOU A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL?

For the first time ever, WPC is holding an event exclusively for our Young Professionals in a special ballroom at the Seattle Sheraton to watch our keynote speakers, with a three-course dinner, live on the big screen.

Additional information, including ticket and sponsorship levels, is available on washingtonpolicy.org/events.

Detailed analysis,
award-winning
coverage



For its in-depth “Race to the Wire” political segments, which featured regular analysis by WPC Vice President for Research Paul Guppy during last fall’s election season, regional cable news outlet NWCN received the prestigious Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Television Political Journalism on March 6. The award called NWCN’s “analysis-heavy coverage ... a political junkie’s dream.”

Given by USC’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Cronkite Award “encourages and showcases substantive and innovative coverage that informs viewers about their electoral choices. The award recognizes television journalism that helps viewers understand who the candidates are; what the issues and ballot propositions are; how electoral choices will affect their lives; how to assess campaign information, including advertising; and how to register, vote and make their own voices heard.”



LITTLE THINGS COUNT.

*Thank you for your work. WPC is a
fantastic group.*

*I am thankful for the work you do and
am very happy to support your efforts!
I am glad I was introduced to your
organization.*

Sarah

SARAH CARPENTER
POULSBO, WASHINGTON

2012 ANNUAL DINNER ATTENDEE

POINT OF VIEW

Recent op-ed columns from WPC researchers Todd Myers and Liv Finne

Education Reform for State Students Blocked by WEA

By Liv Finne, WPC Education Director
Special to *The Seattle Times* on July 16, 2013



DURING the 2013 legislative session that just concluded, lawmakers passed a budget that will direct an additional \$1 billion to public schools, raising total school funding to \$15.2 billion in biennial operating spending. That's an 11 percent increase compared to the last budget.

Yet reforms to improve how the money is spent were blocked by the state's powerful public-sector union, the Washington Education Association (WEA), and its political allies in the Legislature.

The new budget will increase state funding by about \$1,000 per student, to an all-time high of \$11,300 per student. But only about 59 cents of every education dollar reaches the classroom, and restrictive seniority policies prevent students from learning from the best teachers.

A little context is first necessary. Last year, 23,000 Washington students, or 31 percent of the total, failed to pass the state's third-grade reading test. And 26,000 students, or 34 percent, failed to pass the third-grade math test.

One-third of Washington's schools rank as only "Fair" or "Struggling," the lowest two categories on the State Board of Education's School Achievement Index. These and other dismal results led the state Supreme Court to rule in the McCleary decision that "Fundamental reforms are needed for Washington to meet its constitutional obligation to its students. Pouring more money into an outmoded system will not succeed."

Longstanding research confirms what most parents already know: The most important factor in whether students are learning is the quality of the teacher in the classroom.

Studies show that high-performing schools provide an effective and knowledgeable teacher in every classroom, supported by a strong principal who insists on high academic standards for students. In contrast, reducing class sizes has been shown to be much less effective.

During the session, bold education reformers in the Senate, led by Senate Majority Leader Rodney Tom, D-Bellevue, and Sens. Steve Litzow, R-Mercer Island, Bruce Dammeier, R-Puyallup, and Andy Hill, R-Redmond, offered bills that would benefit students.

Their proposals would have allowed school principals to hire the best teachers and end the practice of endlessly transferring bad teachers from one school to another in the infamously bureaucratic "dance of the lemons." They wanted to give schools A-F letter grades so parents could easily understand how well their local schools are performing.

The recommended reforms would have ended the social promotion

of students who cannot read at grade level by third grade. Changes would also have directed future compensation adjustments for teachers, beyond an adjustment for inflation, be provided in the form of professional training in methods that actually work at teaching underachieving students how to read, write, add, subtract, multiply and divide.

All these reforms were supported in the Senate but were blocked by Democratic leaders in the House. Supported by the powerful WEA teachers union, these lawmakers are strong defenders of the educational status quo, fearing policy changes that may threaten the position of adults in the system.

The WEA is also working to cut education services for children. Many school districts, at the request of WEA representatives, are seeking to close school doors at noon Wednesdays or Fridays. While the cuts would certainly reduce classroom work hours for adults, they would deprive students of important instructional hours. In addition, last week the WEA union filed a frivolous lawsuit in an attempt to deny students access to charter schools.

In many states like Wisconsin, Indiana and Florida, lawmakers are improving public education by giving parents more choice in selecting the school that works best for their children. Similarly, Washington voters enacted the new charter-school law to provide school choice for parents in a few districts across the state.

Given the record of the just-ended legislative session, however, it is clear reforms that give most Washington parents a greater voice in their children's education will have to wait for another day.



A Hopeful Step Toward Nonpartisan Climate Policy

By Todd Myers, WPC Environmental Director and author of *Eco-Fads: How the Rise of Trendy Environmentalism Is Harming the Environment*



Dubbed the “greenest governor in America” by environmental groups, new Washington Governor Jay Inslee took quick action on the issue most important to him: climate change.

When crafting his climate-change legislation, he did not look to the usual sources. He did not use the previous governor’s Climate Action Team. Policies pushed by environmental groups were largely absent. He didn’t even give preference to proposals in his own book.

Instead, his proposal, passed by the Legislature this year, ranks climate policies based on how much environmental benefit each policy provides for every public dollar spent. It is a significant departure from past efforts that selected trendy, but ineffective, policies.

More interesting is the pedigree of that idea.

Prioritizing policies based on environmental effectiveness is at the center of model legislation recommended by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a free-market organization that brings state legislators together from across the country to share ideas.

The proposal echoes ALEC draft legislation called “The Environmental Priorities Act.” Adopted by ALEC in 2010, it calls for ranking environmental policies based on where the most benefit can be provided for every taxpayer dollar.

Just as Gov. Inslee’s bill requires the climate study to include “cost-per-ton emission reduction,” examining “the most effective strategy and the trade-offs made to implement that

strategy,” ALEC’s Environmental Priorities Act calls for a study to “create a ranked list identifying the best-to-worst possible policy options” using economic metrics of benefit.

Ironically, ALEC is the latest entry on the left’s enemy list, with President Obama’s Green Jobs Czar Van Jones saying ALEC is “driving the worst policies in America.” Left-wing activists even set up an organization specifically to attack ALEC and demonize the free-market ideas it espouses.

ALEC’s ideas, however, are far more mainstream than the failed environmental policies that have been the hallmark of recent environmental policy. As a result, when presented without partisan labels, ALEC’s ideas find support from policymakers like Inslee looking for good ways to create environmental progress.

This is not to say Gov. Inslee or his advisers looked to ALEC. The left’s crusade against ALEC would prevent that. Stripped of the ALEC label, however, they were willing to include it because the model bills did what they said they wanted to do: find policies that yield the greatest environmental benefit. The language in the governor’s bill mirrors, almost exactly, a proposal I suggested in a column published just before his inauguration.

No matter where the idea came from, it is clear their approach is virtually identical to ALEC’s model legislation.

This is a good thing. The environmental community often claims the environment should not be a partisan issue. A bipartisan approach to promote environmental sustainability is a cause for celebration.

This, however, will probably not be the case. Sadly, environmental policy is more useful as a political bludgeon than as a way to help preserve the wonder of our natural resources for future generations. That is why so many of our current policies are about the latest environmental fad rather than sound science.

The approach favored by Gov. Inslee and ALEC, on the other hand, makes every taxpayer dollar count, demanding real environmental effectiveness rather than picking fashionable policies and hoping for the best.

Time will tell if the governor’s bill remains true to its intent. For now, however, we should welcome the meeting of the minds between America’s “greenest” governor and ALEC. These combined efforts can truly make environmental stewardship a non-partisan success.

Gov. Inslee, dubbed “The greenest governor in the country,” incorporated a WPC idea in his key climate change law. This is a direct result of WPC’s “Environmental Priorities Act,” written by Todd. He encouraged the governor to include it in his bill, which was signed into law this year.

COVER STORY

Supermajority

The want (and the need) for higher taxpayer protection



Voters vs. the Supreme Court: Washington's two-thirds tax limitation

*By Jason Mercier, Director, Center for Government Reform
and Chris Cargill, Eastern Washington Office Director*

ON FEBRUARY 28, 2013, the Washington State Supreme Court threw out the voter-initiated requirement that legislators reach a two-thirds majority, or obtain a vote of the people, before raising taxes. While some lawmakers and interest groups celebrated the decision, others wondered how this commonsense idea ended up in the courts in the first place. And what will happen next?

Requiring a supermajority for tax increases is a broadly supported idea. The people of Washington have affirmed it five times. In fact, support has gone up over time. In 1993, 51% of voters approved Initiative 601, which first enacted the two-thirds provision into state law. In 2012, Initiative 1185 – the fifth two-thirds measure – received 64% support. (By comparison, the same year 56% of Washingtonians voted for President Obama; remarkably, requiring a supermajority for tax increases is more popular than a Democratic Party president in a consistently blue state.)

Popularity aside, legislative opponents of the two-thirds requirement have always seen it as an unconstitutional obstacle to tax increases. Interestingly, despite numerous legislative amendments to the section of law containing the two-thirds vote requirement, lawmakers never fully repealed the mandate. In fact, in 2006, the legislature voted explicitly to reinstate the limitation after suspending it during a previous legislative session. Governor Gregoire signed the bill into law.

But opponents never stopped planning to do away with the tax-limiting restriction, quietly developing a strategy to have the courts do their dirty work. In the waning hours of the “budget focused” 2012 special session, Democrats in the House and Senate finally launched their plan. Both attempted to gather votes on a tax bill that no one expected to pass. The idea was to gain the needed legal standing to sue the voters and overturn the measure. On the second to last day of the special session, before taking action on several pressing matters, the House spent 40 minutes debating a tax increase. As expected, the bill failed to receive the required two-thirds vote. Of note, however, was a well-orchestrated performance by Speaker

of the House Frank Chopp, who made a point of saying that he welcomed the courts clarifying the constitutionality of the rule.

According to the left-of-center blog Publicola, House Democrats confirmed their agenda:

PubliCola has confirmed that the Democrats took the vote in order to cue up a formal court challenge to I-1053, the rule that requires a two-thirds vote to raise taxes....

During last night's vote, Reps. Jenkins, Jamie Pedersen (D-43, Capitol Hill), and David Frockt (D-46, N. Seattle)—all lawyers—asked those questions respectively before the vote.

Speaker Rep. Frank Chopp (D-43, Wallingford) ruled that the constitutional question was up to the courts to decide.

And well, if all goes according to the Democrats' plan, the courts just might.

In May of 2012, the League of Education Voters, Washington Education Association, along with several Democratic Party legislators and others filed their lawsuit against voters. The suit highlighted the failure of the legislature to fund Initiative 728 (to lower class sizes) and 732 (giving teachers raises) as proof of the supposed harm caused by the two-thirds requirement.

On May 30, 2012, King County Superior Court Judge Bruce Heller ruled the tax protection requirement unconstitutional. At the same time, Tim Eyman gathered signatures on I-1185, which would become the final state initiative approving the two-thirds requirement. For years prior to the court ruling, Washington Policy Center has recommended lawmakers provide voters the opportunity to resolve this debate by putting a constitutional amendment on the ballot. We also pursue solutions at the local level.

While battles over two-thirds brewed in the legislature, we have opened lines of communication with municipal leaders about bringing the idea to city and county governments. The idea is simple: Local governments are not subject to the two-thirds restriction that, before the state Supreme Court ruling,

bound state lawmakers. Yet local taxes significantly add to the financial burden shouldered by families and businesses.

Local charter amendments could limit local tax increases promoted by state officials. In a piece we produced in January, we warned that legislative leaders were trying to shift more costs to cities. We wrote that “doing so at the local level, where supermajority requirements are not in place, would appear to make tax increases easier.”

The Pierce County Council on May 29, 2012, sent voters a charter amendment to require a supermajority vote of council members for local tax increases. Charter Amendment 40 passed on November 6, 2012.

Voters in Washington state's second largest city went to the polls in February and approved Proposition 2, amending Spokane's city charter to require a supermajority vote by the city council or voter approval before taxes are increased.

These victories demonstrate the enduring popularity of reasonable limits on taxes, even at the city and county level. In Spokane, WPC built support by meeting with city leaders and through dozens of media appearances, three newspaper op-eds with a combined circulation of 170,000, and numerous speaking engagements in the community.

These local charter amendments seem to be the kind of mechanisms that state Supreme Court justices had in mind when they struck down the two-thirds requirement. In their majority ruling,

justices said they were not judging the wisdom of the policy, but rather how it was put into place. Writing for the majority, Justice Susan Owens said, “Should the people and the legislature still wish to require a supermajority vote for tax legislation, they must do so through constitutional amendment, not through legislation.”

While we are concerned about overruling the overwhelming will of the voters who approved the policy every time it has been on the ballot, there is



much to learn about the court's ruling. The bottom line is that it can and should be done constitutionally.

The reasons why the two-thirds requirement should be passed as a constitutional amendment were made very clear this legislative session in Olympia. Less than two weeks after the Spokane vote (on February 12), and four months after the Pierce County vote (on November 6), the legislature introduced a flurry of bills that would not only increase taxing authority at the local level — both city and county — but would also remove provisions that call for voter approval of certain tax hikes.

Some proposed legislation included:

- House Bill 1925, allowing a city or county to impose a public safety sales and use tax without voter approval
- House Bill 1954, allowing council approval of Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (car tab tax) on vehicle licensing, for certain population areas
- House Bill 1953, allowing transportation districts or county governments to impose their own Motor Vehicle Excise Tax up to 1% of the vehicle value, for certain population areas
- House Bill 1959, allowing a county council to impose the \$40 car tab fee and a Motor Vehicle Excise Tax of up to 1.5% of the vehicle value, for certain population areas
- House Bill 1865, allowing local transportation benefit districts to raise sales taxes without a vote of the people, for certain population areas.

Some local lawmakers across the state were “excited” about the possibilities. In a recent article in Washington State Wire, Kirkland City Councilman Dave Asher said, “If you give us local tax increase options, we will use them. All the options you have laid out, in even the most generous combination, will account for less than a quarter of the needs of local governments. So you can be assured that any revenues you authorize will be needed.”

Voters in the city of Spokane and Pierce County were smart. They saw this trend coming and got ahead of it. Yakima voters will consider the same change in an election in November.

It must be so for the state. Legislators must refer the matter to voters in the form of a constitutional amendment. Instead of disregarding the will of voters (44 of 49 legislative districts passed Initiative 1185) the legislature can learn from the experiences of Pierce County and Spokane. They can learn from the initiatives that passed five times.

A WINDOW TO OUR WORK



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Should Cities Ban Plastic Bags?

No: *The Harm Is Overblown*

by Todd Myers, Director, Center for the Environment
October 8, 2012

Across the world, cities are joining in the latest environmental fad—banning plastic grocery bags. Activists think banning the bags is a simple and environmentally responsible approach.

less than 1% of their litter consists of plastic bags. As a further point of reference, in Washington state, an average-size state, the state budget for all litter cleanup is about \$7 million.

As for the idea that plastic bags cost consumers more, the reason grocery stores use plastic instead of paper or other bags is that they cost less and hold more. Reusable bags are even more expensive.



2012 ANNUAL REPORT

Following the 2012 election, Washington Policy Center is working harder than ever to promote limited government and bring the benefits of free-market ideas to Washington state. The bright spots that came out of 2012's elections were policy victories which were championed by WPC.

Our successes in 2012 show we are making a difference and shaping public policy. This past year:

- WPC's analysts appeared in print, radio, TV and online media more than 1,500 times, an average of five times per day
- 17 of WPC's policy recommendations were signed into law by our state's Democratic governor following the legislative sessions
- WPC held more than 45 policy events and conferences across the state, informing policymakers, candidates, business leaders and voters on critical issues
- We launched our first-ever television ad campaign, which reached 2.2 million households across the state and introduced WPC as an election resource
- WPC released the fourth edition of our *Policy Guide for Washington State*, our most popular publication; since the first edition was released, 33 commonsense recommendations have been signed into law
- More than 1,600 people attended our gala 2012 Annual Dinner to hear from European Parliament member Daniel Hannan, whose stirring and impassioned speech on the importance of safeguarding our liberties was insightful and encouraging
- We awarded our 2012 Jennifer Dunn-Thomson Scholarship to UW alumna and former WPC intern Kendra Clark; WPC's Doug and Janet True Internship program continues to introduce future leaders to our important work.

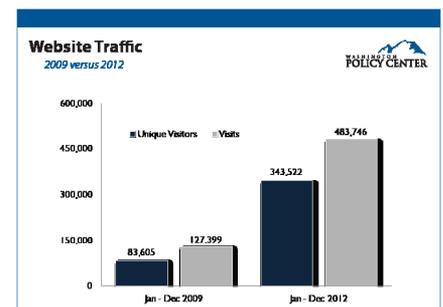
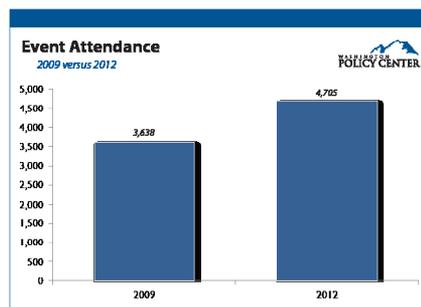
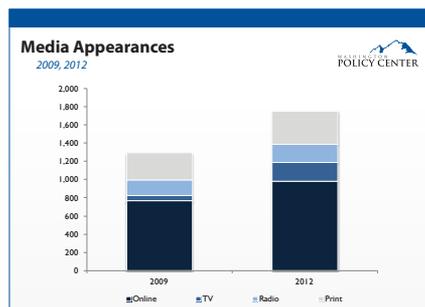
What's more, during the 2012 elections, voters adopted all four ballot measures that reflected longstanding WPC policy recommendations.

1. Our long-term efforts to minimize the tax burden made progress with the passage of Initiative 1185, requiring a 2/3 legislative supermajority to raise taxes. The initiative passed in every county and will make it difficult to raise taxes over the next two years.
2. We are very excited that Initiative 1240 passed and we are now the 42nd state in the country to allow charter schools. Thanks to the hard work of our Education Center, we will soon see real education reform in our state.
3. Our Transportation Center's longtime analysis that light rail does not reduce congestion paid off with the defeat of Prop. 1 to raise the sales tax to extend light rail across the Columbia River in Clark County.
4. Finally, the constitutional debt amendment that our Center for Government Reform director analyzed and recommended passed in every county. The amendment will gradually lower the state debt limit, making it more difficult for lawmakers to place financial burdens on future generations of Washingtonians.

With the policy momentum WPC is carrying into 2013, we are not slowing down. We are invigorated and ready to make this our most successful year to date! Moving forward, we will continue to educate citizens and policymakers about the issues that are threatening our state.

In our chaotic and complex world, WPC's research gives added focus to the key public policy challenges confronting the people of our state. We appreciate your support and hope you will continue to join us.

GROWTH IN WPC IMPACT, 2009 VERSUS 2012



Our media and event numbers since 2009 show significant year-over-year growth in WPC's reach and impact. 2012 marked our first revenue-positive year, an impressive feat for an organization of our age and size.

2012 REVENUE:
\$2,014,292

Our October 15 Annual Dinner event welcomed over 1,600 attendees in Bellevue and Spokane to hear about America's current course from national opinion pollster Scott Rasmussen, EU Parliament member Daniel Hannan, and political analyst Ed Rollins. We also recognized key legislators who helped promote Washington's new charter school legislation with the Champion of Freedom Award.



Members of WPC's growing Young Professionals group enjoyed after-hours events with elected representatives, policymakers and prominent business officials at Pyramid Alehouse in May and November.



WPC'S IMPACT IN EASTERN WASHINGTON

Impact and growing support are the words that describe WPC's Eastern Washington efforts in 2012. WPC is the only policy research organization with offices in Spokane and the Tri-Cities, and our efforts there continue to expand.

In 2012, we again held legislative Wake-Up Call forums throughout Eastern Washington — connecting legislators to citizens via video conference. Those forums are the template for remote testifying options now available to legislative leaders.

WPC's impact was felt in the Tri-Cities in March 2012 when we released research on impact fees being introduced by the Pasco School District. As we pointed out, the \$4,683 per-home fee would not provide the additional resources needed to build new schools. The Pasco School District is now looking for additional funding options.

WPC's Eastern Washington Health Care event — held in the days following the Supreme Court's historic

Affordable Care Act ruling in June — attracted a sold-out crowd to the Davenport Hotel to hear from former Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum.

WPC's 2012 Annual Dinner in Eastern Washington, featuring former advisor to President Reagan, Mr. Ed Rollins, also sold out. It attracted nearly 500 in Spokane.

Throughout the 2012 general election, WPC's Eastern Washington director Chris Cargill traveled around Eastern Washington to share resources and recommendations on ballot measures.

The number of WPC supporters in Eastern Washington hit record levels in 2012.



Education reformer and charter school proponent Paul Pastorek, the former head of New Orleans schools, spoke at WPC's 2012 Education Lunch.



CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Todd Myers, director of WPC's Center for the Environment, received national attention for his book *Eco-Fads* and policy work. During 2012, Todd traveled to six national events to speak about his book, including the Heritage Foundation conference in Colorado Springs and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative meeting in Milwaukee. Todd's work on the environmental costs of plastic bag bans appeared in a special Wall Street Journal environmental supplement.

Dr. Terry Anderson, a founder of PERC, a nationally recognized free-market environmental organization, keynoted our 10th Annual Environmental Policy Conference and Lunch in Seattle. He talked about the free-market approach to environmental sustainability.

The center also had legislative success, partnering with the Sightline Institute to remove restrictions on car sharing, a bill that was signed by Governor Gregoire.

In 2012, Jason Mercier offered insight and testimony on the state's budget and Initiative 1185, passed by voters in November, requiring a legislative supermajority vote before raising taxes.



CENTER FOR EDUCATION

The Center for Education made charter schools its primary focus in 2012. Relying on our 2011 assessment of charter schools, the state PTA affirmed support for new legislation, leading to a bipartisan legislative effort to allow charter schools — a measure which was blocked by opponents. Supporters then decided to appeal directly to Washington's citizens by filing Initiative 1240. WPC provided accurate information about charters and how they benefit parents, teachers and students. The center published "A Guide to Major Charter School Studies," "Citizen's Guide to I-1240: To Allow Public Charter Schools," several editorials in state newspapers, and numerous blog posts.

When voters approved I-1240 in November, they passed Washington's most significant education reform in 30 years, and one of the best charter school laws in the country. The center will now report on the state's implementation of charter schools through its charter school follow-up project.



WPC recognized the efforts of the Environmental Center's founding advisory board members and supporters at its 10th anniversary Environmental Policy Conference.

CENTER FOR GOVERNMENT REFORM

With the 64% passage of I-1185 in the 2012 election, voters followed our recommendation to re-affirm the state's legislative supermajority vote requirement to raise taxes. Voters also reduced the state's debt limit with the passage of SJR 8221. Both measures are important steps toward focusing state government on its core functions and building a sustainable budget. Our Center for Government Reform director Jason Mercier has worked on these issues extensively over the last several years.

Three bills also passed the legislature and were signed into law by Governor Gregoire in 2012 reflecting WPC recommendations, resulting in a billion dollars in savings to taxpayers (HB 2824). They include changes to the state's contract process (HB 2452), a balanced budget and budget outlook requirement (SB 6636), and repeal of the unfunded mandate to reduce class sizes (I-728).

CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE

People in Washington state have been worried about the impact of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. So WPC's Center for Health Care established a Speakers Bureau and Dr. Roger Stark addressed over 60 organizations in the state, discussing the new law.

Federal health care reform was also the topic of the Center's 10th Annual Health Care Conference in July. More than 450 health industry professionals, policymakers, media and citizens participated in our conference in Seattle and a special health care lunch in Spokane. The events focused on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the individual mandate in the Affordable Care Act. Former Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum, the leader of the state attorneys general lawsuit against the ACA, spoke at both the Seattle conference and Spokane lunch events.

The Center for Health Care also contributed to the debate as Washington state sets up its health insurance exchange.

Small Business forums held around the state brought business owners, concerned citizens and lawmakers together to vote on the state's important business issues.



CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION

In 2012 the Center for Transportation published studies on light rail and transit agencies around the state. We focused on Clark County and published a Key Facts analysis of the county's transit agency, and a Citizens' Guide to Proposition 1, addressing Portland-Vancouver light rail funding. We also released the only poll on the issue, which found that 57% of voters did not support funding light rail. All three publications received significant attention and media coverage. In November, voters rejected the ballot measure.

At the request of WPC, the State Auditor's Office looked at Sound Transit's ridership forecasts; the auditor found unreliable forecasts and oversight problems. WPC testified at the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee and urged lawmakers to make Sound Transit's board directly elected and accountable.

WPC filed an amicus brief asking the state's Supreme Court to accept direct review on the issue of tribal gas taxes. The Court sided with WPC and the plaintiff, and the case is back in trial court.

CENTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS

The Center for Small Business kicked off the year by hosting a press conference at the Capitol to release "7 Steps on the Road to Economic Recovery: Key Recommendations to Improve Washington's Small Business Climate." Based on these recommendations, WPC was invited by lawmakers to testify on numerous bills affecting the state's small business climate.

The biennial series of Small Business Forums reached out to business owners across the state to bring WPC researchers, policymakers and small business owners together to identify and discuss real solutions to the policy problems facing our state's businesses. More than 600 small business owners attended the eight forums and heard from panels of experts on issues such as tax policy, workers' compensation, health care reform and government regulations. The result was "Improving Our State's Business Climate: Where Do We Go From Here?" a list of policy recommendations identified by forum participants that the Center researched and presented to policymakers.



Transportation expert Wendell Cox discusses the role of smart growth in transportation planning at WPC's May 2012 Transportation Lunch.



Bill McCollum, former Florida Attorney General, addressed the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on the Affordable Care Act at WPC's 2012 Health Care Conference.



WPC STAFF, 2013

Top row, left to right: Erin Shannon, Small Business Director; Jason Mercier, Government Reform Director; Kaylee Donahue, Development Assistant; Bob Pishue, Transportation Director; Mary Catherine McAleer, Eastern Washington Research Assistant; Austin Cooper, Research Intern

Center row: Dr. Roger Stark, Health Care Policy Analyst; Paul Guppy, Vice President for Research; Lisa Shin, Communications Director; Dann Mead Smith, President; Sydney Jansen, Development Coordinator; Todd Myers, Environment Director; Tyler Nebeker, Communications Coordinator

Bottom row: Katie Bulger, Event Coordinator; Chris Cargill, Eastern Washington Office Director; Stephanie True, Development Director; Liv Finne, Education Director; Braden Goodwin, Operations Manager