



WASHINGTON
POLICY CENTER

Improving lives through market solutions

2021
ANNUAL
REPORT



Ben Carson speaks at the 2021 Annual Dinner


Dear friends of WPC,

This year was a year of transformation at Washington Policy Center. WPC changed from an organization with two major hubs in Seattle and Spokane, to a decentralized organization with locations throughout the state as research staff continued to flourish working remotely. We saw WPC's long-time president, Dann Mead Smith, leave the organization in the fall, opening up a national search for a new President and CEO for the first time in twenty-five years, and Paul Guppy, WPC's long-serving Vice President for Research capably step in to serve as interim president.

WPC faced a particularly challenging legislative session, with continued COVID restrictions and a legislative majority unfriendly to WPC recommendations. We saw record abundance of tax revenue come into the state, creating an unprecedented opportunity for significant sales tax relief just as inflation was carving its way into our wallets. Unfortunately, despite years of lip-service regarding the burden of the sales tax on Washington's working families, the majority leadership in the legislature refused to act.

Despite all that, within this report, you'll see the powerful impact WPC was able to have and its important and unique role in our state.

Sincerely,



Mark Pinkowski
Chair, Washington Policy Center



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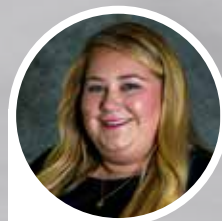
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Policy Victories

The Washington State Legislature convened on January 11th, 2021 for a scheduled 105-day session. Although the majority Democrats set all committee schedules and floor action on bills in both houses, a number of policy decisions reflected Washington Policy Center policy recommendations and free-market principles. Following are examples of policy decisions made by the legislature that adopted positive reforms recommended by WPC, or defeated proposals that WPC research showed would have been harmful to the people of our state.

Cutting regulations and helping people find work

HB 1399 was drafted based on WPC's research work and was introduced on January 27th to reduce barriers to getting an occupational license for people who have completed a prison sentence. Research by WPC analyst Todd Myers showed that arbitrary state licensing rules impose barriers to employment and hit low-income people hardest. WPC published a Legislative Memo on the bill and Todd testified in support of it at House (February 18th) and Senate (March 18th) public hearings. The bill passed the House on March 1st, passed the Senate on April 10th, and was signed into law by the governor on May 3rd.

Taxpayer protections against property tax increases

SJR 8204 was introduced on January 29th and sought to repeal a provision of the state constitution that protects homeowners and other property owners from high property taxes. It would have lowered the percentage of the public vote needed to impose a new public school levy from 60% to 55%. WPC published a Legislative Memo analysis of the bill in February, and education expert, Liv Finne, testified on it before the Senate Ways and Means Committee on February 8th. The measure died in committee.

Increasing access to care by allowing tele-health services

SB 5423 was introduced on February 4th to allow doctors in other states to treat Washington state patients online or by phone. HB 1196 was introduced on January 14th to ensure that insurance policies cover tele-health services provided by telephone or the internet, to serve people living in rural areas and small towns. WPC has long called for cutting state regulations that artificially prevent health care innovations that serve patients. In March, WPC Research Fellow Dr. Susan Cero published a study, "What Washington Got Right," in support of tele-health services. In April, both bills passed the legislature and were signed into law by the governor in early May.

Opening schools statewide

WPC published a Legislative Memo analysis of SB 5037, a bill to safely re-open public schools, and Liv Finne testified at a public hearing in support of the bill. In February, WPC published data on the need for school re-opening that was reported by KING 5 News (NBC). Three weeks later, Governor Inslee issued an order to require public schools to at least partially re-open by April 19th. The governor's policy change accomplished the goal proposed by SB 5037.

Protecting farmers and ranchers who lease public land

HB 1199 was introduced on January 14th and would protect farmers and ranchers who lease public land by requiring the Department of Natural Resources to pay full compensation to leaseholders if state officials decide to end the lease agreement early. WPC had recommended this compensation policy as necessary for public officials to deal fairly with farmers and ranchers who lease public lands in good faith. The bill passed the House on February 12th. Pam Lewison published updated information in support of the bill on February 21st. The bill passed the Senate on March 30th, and it was signed by the governor on April 14th.

No death/estate tax rate increase

HB 1465 was introduced on February 2nd and proposed to increase the state death tax rate to 40%. WPC published a Legislative Memo analysis of the bill and WPC Vice President Paul Guppy testified on it at a House hearing on February 9th. The bill died in committee.

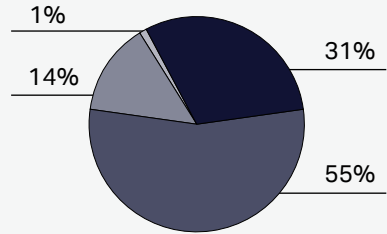
Protecting small businesses from over-regulation

SB 5062 was introduced on January 11th and would have imposed major new regulations on Washington business in a misguided effort to promote consumer privacy. Building on our major study, "Washington state small business guide to data privacy laws," WPC showed that heavy regulations that might be applied to large corporations don't work for small businesses and that SB 5062's hardline approach would hurt small firms and neighborhood businesses while doing little to protect their customers. Mark Harmsworth presented these findings at a public hearing on March 17th. The measure later died in the Senate Rules Committee.

2021

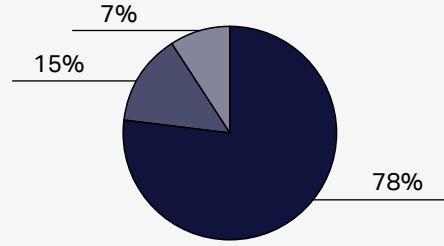
**Total Revenue
\$5,153,940**

Revenue Sources



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- Pillar Society
- Special Events
- In-Kind
- Free Markets Create

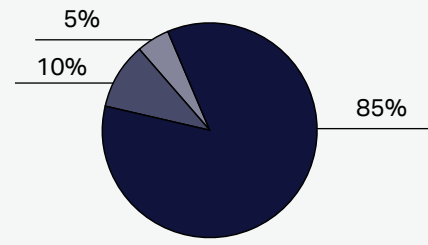
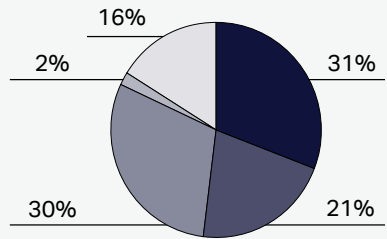
Revenue Breakdown



- Individuals
- Foundations
- Corporations & Businesses

2020

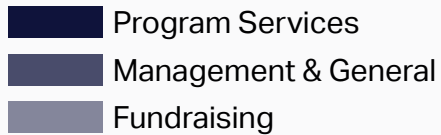
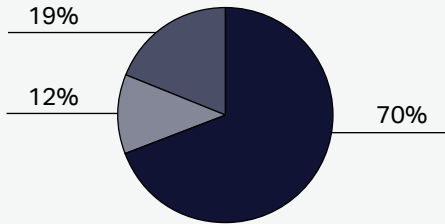
**Total Revenue
\$4,112,829**



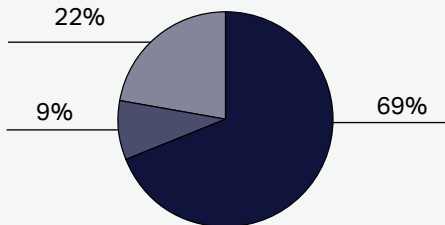
MEDIA IMPACT

Revenue Use

2021



2020



PUBLICATIONS MEDIA TOTALS

991 Print and Online articles

193 Op-eds

38 Television Interviews

1049 Radio hits

2271 Total media hits

Legislative Memo: 25

Blog: 464

Policy Note: 18

Policy Brief: 9

Our Support

Washington Policy Center had its most successful year of fundraising, closing out 2021 raising over \$5.1 million. Our funding comes from various sources including individuals, businesses, foundations and corporations who make meaningful contributions to advance WPC's seven research centers work. WPC does not accept government money and nearly 95% of donations come from Washington state. WPC's Pillar Society members are an integral part of WPC's revenue source, making a three-year pledge to support WPC's mission and the Annual Dinner which brings together 2,500 people from across Washington state to celebrate free-market ideas.

Washington Policy Center is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. To preserve our independence, we accept no government funding, and we do not perform contract work. Contributions are deductible for federal income tax purposes as allowed by law. Our tax ID # is 91-1752769.

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About WPC's Pillar Society:

WPC's Pillar Society distinguishes donors who make a substantial three-year pledge to Washington Policy Center. Pledges start at \$15,000 over three years and go up to \$1,000,000. Each pledge includes VIP tickets or a table of 10 at the Annual Dinner, based on pledge level, as well as personalized support and event sponsorship plans.

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 UBS Financial Services
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Initiative on Agriculture

Pamela Lewison, Director

In 2021, Washington state became the sixth state to embrace overtime pay for all agricultural workers. The phased-in approach to overtime pay adopted by the legislature will be remembered as a landmark moment in our state's agricultural landscape. The Initiative on Agriculture provided data and daily input during the negotiation process to minimize the damage of the bill by preventing the assessment and collection of retroactive pay in addition to the beginning of overtime pay.

The phase-in of overtime pay was set for 2022, with time-and-a-half being required for all employees who work more than 55 hours a week; in 2023, the hours threshold will be lowered to 48 hours; and, in 2024, it will be lowered again to 40 hours.

The daily communication and work with the agricultural lobby on the agricultural overtime bill extended the network and reach of the Initiative on Agriculture. The increased visibility of the Initiative has grown its presence and effectiveness in the media, in agricultural communities, and in the legislature. Pam had two op-eds featured in *The Seattle Times* this year.

In 2021 the Initiative on Agriculture was invited to join several influential committees throughout the state and nation. Pam and the Initiative are active members of the American National Cattlewomen's Legislative Committee, the American Farm Bureau Federation Grassroots Outreach Team, the Washington State Farm Bureau PAC Board of Trustees, the Washington Cattlewomen's legislative representative, the Grant County Farm Bureau legislative representative, the King-Pierce Farm Bureau iEat iVote/My Fork Supports Farms project, the Tri-Dec Regional Chamber Ag Council, and the Grant County Fairgrounds horticulture building superintendent.



Center for Education

Liv Finne, Director

The Center succeeded in helping to secure \$8 million more for charter school funding. The next policy goal is to give charter schools equal access to the same capital funding other public schools receive. The Center reported on the state's policy of funding discrimination against charter school families, and on the failure of the state to extend the time for authorizing new charter schools.

The Center reported the governor's decision to keep traditional public schools closed for 13 months, while private schools and charter public schools were allowed to open. Our highlighting the issue, backed by objective data, helped Washington join the rest of the nation in reopening public schools.

The Center published an open letter in late April pointing out the flaws of SB 5044, the bill to require K-12 schools to impose Critical Race Theory (CRT) ideology. WPC was joined by three prominent community groups, the Center for Latino Leadership, the Ethnic Chambers of Commerce, and Washington Asians for Equality as co-signers. The open letter was published in nine major newspapers statewide. The Center's research on CRT led several school districts to reject this harmful and divisive ideology.

WPC also reported on key public education figures that officials sought to hide – for example, that test scores show 70 percent of students failed the state math test and the 52 percent failed the state English test, or that 41,000 families have pulled their children from public schools.

Our research shows that parents' desire for school choice alternatives is more popular than ever. We published a comprehensive study on the school choice laws passed in 18 states that provide resources directly to families to pay for homeschooling or private school tuition.



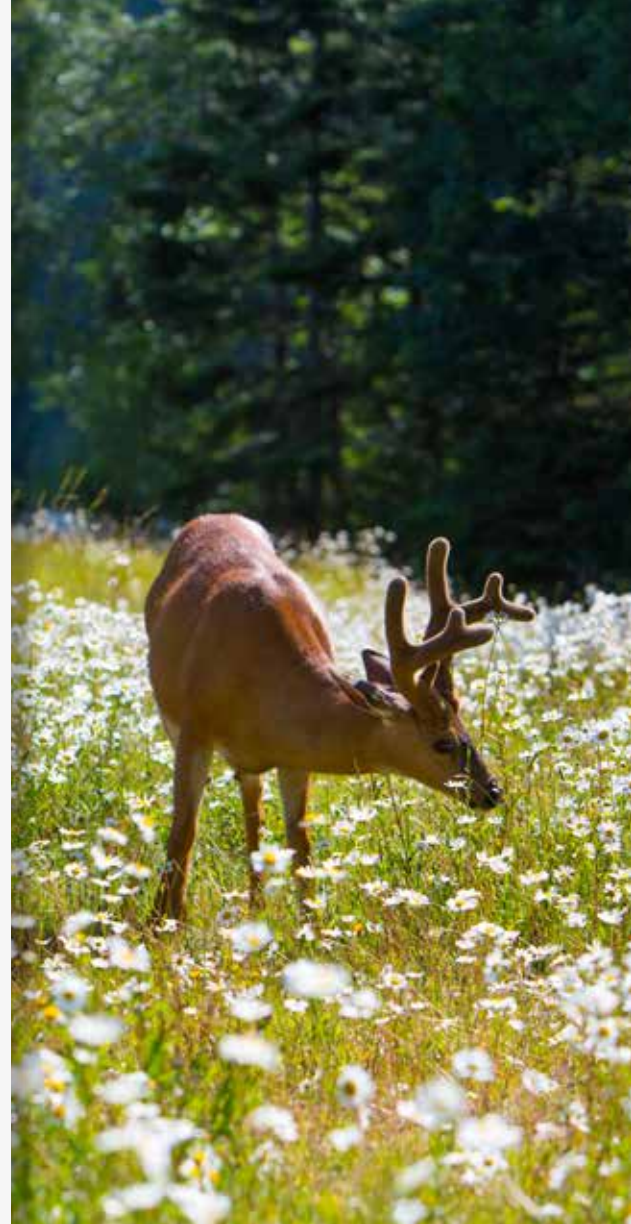
Center for the Environment

Todd Myers, Director

In an extremely consequential and difficult year in state environmental policy that will have long-term impacts, the Center for Environmental Policy was active in many of the biggest legislative battles.

During the push to adopt some of the most expensive and wasteful climate policies in the nation, we provided detailed costs analyses that were cited by legislators, activists, and the media. Although the legislation passed, even our opponents acknowledged our influence on the debate. A Singapore-based biofuel company even spent \$150,000 to hire a private PR firm to attack us. Additionally, we exposed a phony legislative deal that was broken by the governor and the chair of the House Environment Committee.

Our biggest success in 2021 was to highlight a positive alternative to the top-down, planning approach to environmental policy. Working with Indian tribes across the state, we showed how local control, accountability, and strong incentives result in responsible stewardship of natural resources – in fisheries, forestry, and wildlife management. Our video series, podcast interviews, and national articles highlighted how a flexible approach, using local knowledge, yields superior environmental results that are consistent with local culture and prosperity. We also joined with the National Intertribal Timber Council to publish a study on ways to solve forest health problems across the West.



Center for Government Reform

Jason Mercier, Director

The main priority for the Center for Government Reform in 2021 was stopping a state income tax and urging passage of emergency powers reform. WPC's popular online No Income Tax petition received more than 15,000 signatures.

After the legislature moved to impose an unconstitutional income tax on capital gains (SB 5096), we held in-person meetings with newspaper editorial writers across the state. They responded positively with editorials in *The Seattle Times*, *Tacoma News Tribune*, *Yakima Herald*, *Tri-City Herald* and *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*. In addition, the *Tri-City Herald* and *Tacoma News Tribune* prominently featured WPC's video presentations on their websites explaining why the capital gains tax law is an illegal income tax.

The non-profit Opportunity For All Coalition (OFAC) filed a lawsuit against the capital gains income tax and WPC played a critical role in providing key legal research. All of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit are WPC members. Our research was also featured throughout the legal brief filed in court.

To show how unpopular an income tax is, officials in 15 cities and 12 counties passed local income tax bans based on WPC policy recommendations. In addition, 78% of Yakima voters passed an income tax ban charter amendment. WPC's policy research was featured prominently in the public debate leading up to the vote.

On another issue, we joined with the League of Women Voters in co-authoring a *Seattle Times* op-ed promoting remote testimony and legislative transparency reforms.

Several newspapers also ran our op-ed calling for the legislature to act on emergency powers reform, to limit the time a governor can exercise one-man rule. Versions of the op-ed ran in the *Tri-City Herald*, *Kitsap Sun*, *Centralia Chronicle*, *KHQ news*, *Center Square* and *NBC Spokane*.



Center for Health Care

Elizabeth Hovde, Director

In 2021 the Center for Health Care focused on informing the public about the threat from radical activists wanting to ban private health insurance and impose socialist universal health care on the state. Due in part to our work, a ballot initiative to impose a government-run health system was withdrawn because organizers couldn't get enough voter signatures.

We also succeeded in informing the public about the harsh long-term care payroll tax that lawmakers planned to levy starting on January 1, 2022. The tax would have taken 58 cents out of every \$100 that workers earned while providing little or no practical benefit. Due largely to our work the governor suspended collection of the tax, and the first bill lawmakers passed in January was to delay the unpopular tax for at least 18 months, past the next election.

We recommend repeal of the law, and several lawmakers already agree with this position. WPC also recommends passage of large-scale reforms that will lower the cost of private coverage, such as cutting the tax on health insurance, repealing laws that limit the supply of long-term care, and allowing Washington residents to buy insurance at competitive prices in any state.

The Center for Health Care also published science-based research on whether state officials should require all children in the state to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of going to school. We reported on data showing the current vaccine did not stop the spread of disease and that officials were not taking account of the science of natural immunity.



Center for Worker Rights

Elizabeth Hovde, Director

The Center for Worker Rights published research on the harmful effect the governor's vaccine mandate had on state employees and public services. WPC research showed the mandate policy had no impact on reducing COVID case rates but did do extensive harm to family budgets and careers. As a result, the vaccine mandate policy was canceled as it applied to the general private sector. WPC will continue to recommend voluntary vaccine use by public-sector workers as well.

The Center created a sponsored content campaign in *The Seattle Times* with a primary goal of informing public employees of their Janus right to opt-out of union membership and a secondary goal of educating the general public about that right. Our story was read 7,514 times, 2,700 more than initially projected. The average read time was an unusually high 15 minutes compared to a typical response of 3 to 8 minutes.

In 2021, WPC continued to produce research on positive reforms to increase Washington's competitive advantage and make the state a more attractive place to live, work and raise a family. The Center for Worker Rights continues to defend the right of employees to leave a union and keep their jobs, and to create fair policies that encourage investment, job-creation and innovation.



Coles Center for Transportation

Mariya Frost, Director

Center Director, Mariya Frost, wrote about and testified by invitation to the legislature on the governor's proposed transportation budget, emphasizing that delaying projects because of electrification, high speed rail, and other climate-oriented projects is not the right approach.

She recommended that the legislature maintain existing infrastructure and keep promises made to the public in past transportation packages. She also recommended a performance audit of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to cut waste and improve how it spends existing maintenance funds.

Later in the year, the governor imposed a strict vaccine mandate for state employees which resulted in WSDOT firing over 400 employees. Mariya pointed out the negative impact on highway safety as the winter season approached. She wrote about subsequent and frequent road closures. For example, Snoqualmie Pass was closed for several days because WSDOT snowplow drivers had been fired. Our published work highlighted the impact on drivers and shared exclusive messages and photos from former WSDOT employees who provided inside information. Our consistent message was that the hardline vaccine mandate policy has trade-offs, does not reduce COVID-19 case rates, and is harmful to the traveling public.

Other work from the Center included research and tracking of state efforts to impose a Road Usage Charge (mileage tax), providing key facts on statewide transit agencies, and producing online videos on ways to improve transit. We produced a video about transit innovation and the work Canadian company Pantonium is doing to make public transit more efficient and customer-centric during COVID. We produced another video on the benefit of contracting transit services to the private sector.



Center for Small Business

Mark Harmsworth, Director

In 2021 the Center for Small Business highlighted the failure of the state to limit the harm of economic lockdowns and the overreach and hypocrisy in the rules applied to business owners. The Center's work on the harm imposed by strict economic lockdowns has now become the predominant finding of other economic-impact studies. WPC data has been shown to be accurate and fully a year ahead of reporting by the rest of the media.

The Center also gained significant media coverage on the medical ethical violations of the Department of Labor and Industries' vaccine passport requirements. Soon afterward, these requirements were rescinded by state and county officials.

The legislature introduced several reform bills recommended by WPC. Lawmakers introduced SB 1493, SB 5193, SB 5478 and HB 1455 based on WPC research and passed reforms to repair the failings of the Employment Security Department. The Department had struggled with significant shortcomings in slow processing times for claims, adjudication backlogs, fraudulent claims and overpayment problems that had plagued the troubled agency for years.

WPC's research work highlighted several harmful bills that, after extensive negative media attention, failed to pass. These included a new government technology oversight agency, the "bounty hunter" bill, urging frivolous lawsuits against small business owners, and the flawed data privacy bill which would have created a new set of costly rules for businesses.

The Center published Citizen Guide studies on two radical Bellingham ballot initiatives, one to impose rent control and another to impose restrictions on hourly earnings. Voters soundly rejected both measures in the November election.



Eastern Washington

Chris Cargill, Director

WPC's Eastern Washington office continued to adapt to serve the east side of our state with the Legislative Lunchbox series during the legislative session. Modifying it to a virtual event allowed WPC to continue to connect Eastern Washington to legislators in the midst of the busy session, while also expanding the opportunity to statewide audiences. Chris Cargill, WPC's Eastern Washington director, also began a regular column in *The Spokesman Review*, the state's second largest newspaper, giving WPC a chance to communicate with the Eastside's most politically diverse audience.

WPC's remote testimony recommendation was fully utilized by the legislature, allowing Eastern Washington residents to have their voices heard in committee hearings held by both chambers of the legislature.

WPC's Eastern Washington office continued to spearhead efforts to expand local collective bargaining transparency and bans on local income taxes.

Three counties and eleven cities have followed WPC's recommendation to ban local income taxes.





Young Professionals WPC

YP Director Marissa Gaston began her full-time role in January and a new YP Coordinator, Robyn Antoine, was hired in March.

Serving a constituent base of over 3,500 supporters and contacts, YP closed the year with over 220 members (our highest on record) and hosted two dozen events with a total of 1,000 attending. We maintained our college clubs at Gonzaga, the University of Washington, and Seattle University, and reinvigorated our club at Washington State University.

YP contracted with Brandtegit marketing agency to upgrade our program's branding and social media presence. YP saw unprecedented growth in its social media following, with YP Instagram followers increasing by over 350 percent in less than twelve months. YP leveraged this following to funnel attendees to our events, build partnerships, and cultivate potential members. YP also maintained its mentorship program and, for the third year running, supported an annual scholarship for the Summit Sierra Charter School.

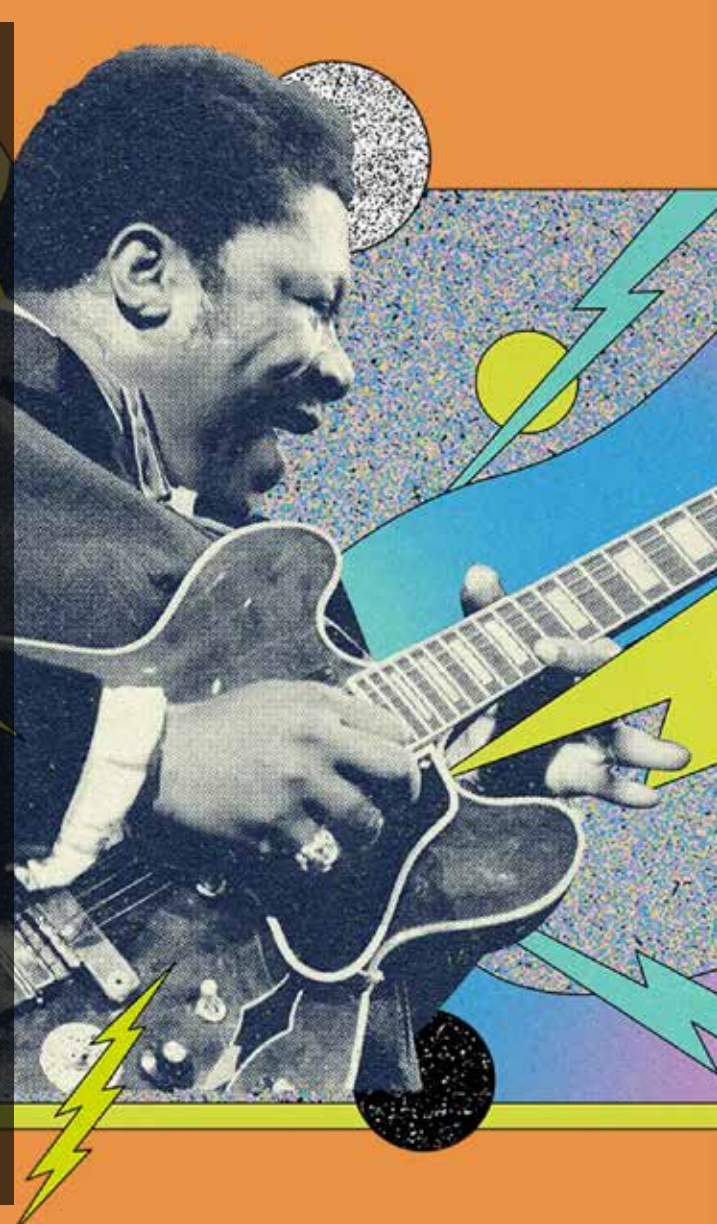
YP's Book Club, launched in late 2020, matured into a well-loved and well-attended (8-15 people on average) monthly gathering. The Book Club's smaller, more intimate scale fostered a rich sense of community amongst YP members and regularly funneled new members into the program. YP continued to offer quality virtual event programming as we transitioned back to in-person events, including debates on climate change and homelessness policies, as well as discussions on Critical Race Theory.

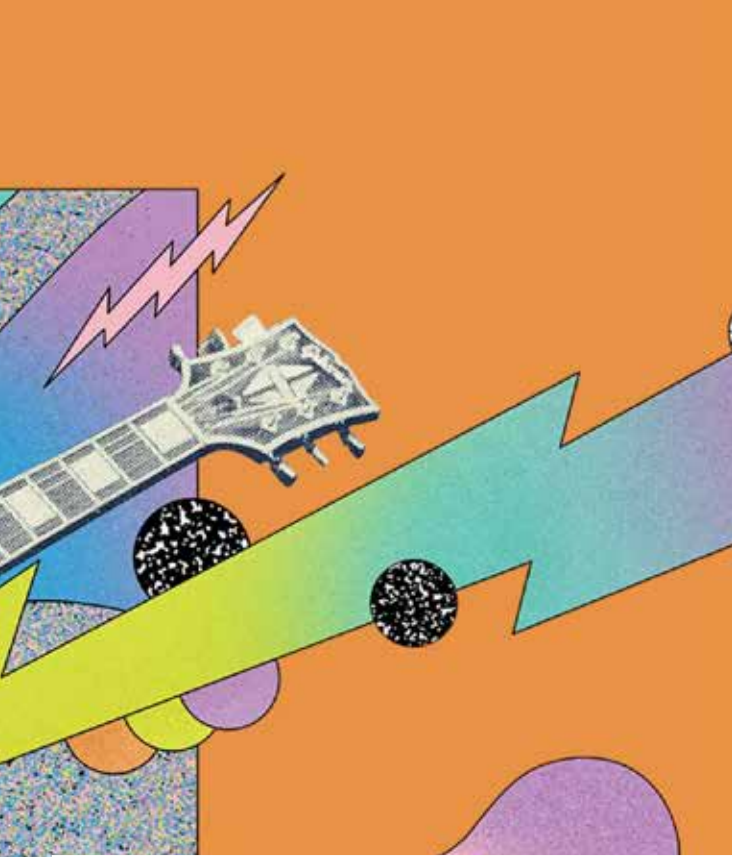
While 2021 presented a myriad of challenges, especially regarding lockdown policies, YP creatively stewarded its membership through social media, events, and relationship-building.



FREE MARKETS DESTROY

Washington Policy Center's Free Markets Destroy campaign was launched in 2020 – an effort to convince Millennials and Gen Z's of the power of the marketplace to use creative destruction to improve lives. The campaign has reached more than 12 million social media accounts in Washington state and many more throughout the country. It was nominated for a national Bold Brand Boost award in 2021 and has shown remarkable staying power and brand ID. In recent polling, more than 30% of Washingtonians aged 18-40 say they are familiar with the phrase or campaign “Free Markets Destroy.” In addition to focusing on climate change, boredom, high rents, disease and hunger, WPC added a sixth topic to focus on how free markets destroy racism.





DISEASE

HUNGER

HIGH RENTS

CLIMATE CHANGE

BOREDOM



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