Growing our IMPACT

2013 ANNUAL REPORT
No other research organization in Washington state is committed to Eastern Washington like Washington Policy Center. WPC opened its first Eastern Washington office with Eastern Washington Director Chris Cargill nearly five years ago and has since increased in stature as the most trusted public policy organization in the region.

In 2013, WPC held nearly a dozen events in Eastern Washington, including our Annual Dinner, Health Care Luncheon, Solutions Summit and Wake-Up Forums. Collectively, nearly 2,000 attended our Eastern Washington events last year.

The Wake-Up Forums - which connect constituents to their legislators via video conference during the legislative session - have been a model for citizen participation in the legislative session. WPC is proposing to extend an opportunity for all citizens of the state to participate and testify – not just those living close to Olympia – using technology that is readily available.

Commitment to Eastern Washington is about more than events – it’s about impact. And that’s why WPC ideas and recommendations are being used by lawmakers and citizens across Eastern Washington to change their communities for the better. In 2013, WPC was proud to recommend changes to the way cities in Eastern Washington raise the financial burden they place on citizens. WPC suggested a two-thirds supermajority requirement to raise taxes at the local level. In February, Spokane voters approved the charter change. In November, Yakima voters followed suit. Because of WPC’s work and your support, it now takes more agreement by lawmakers to increase a citizen’s tax burden.

In 2013, Spokane voters approved WPC’s supermajority amendment recommendation.

... “Councilwoman Nancy McLaughlin, who is sponsoring the amendment, said the idea for the [supermajority requirement for tax increases] came from...the Washington Policy Center, a conservative think tank.”

In 2013, WPC’s 1st Solutions Summit in the Tri-Cities was attended by more than 300 citizens, elected leaders and experts including Dr. Shelley Redinger of Spokane Public Schools (above left) and Cindi Williams of the Washington State Charter Schools Commission (above right). The half-day policy conference was covered extensively by newspapers and television stations throughout the mid-Columbia.
The Wall Street Journal named Environmental Director Todd Myers one of their Energy and Environment Expert Panelists. Todd wrote several pieces for the Journal during the course of the year on a range of issues.

The Environmental Center also had a strong influence on the direction of climate policy in Washington. Governor Inslee included a key metric of environmental effectiveness we proposed in his signature climate legislation. That information was later useful in highlighting proposals that had high cost and low environmental benefit, such as the low-carbon fuel standard proposed by the Governor. Todd was also quoted nationally regarding the Pacific Coast Climate Action Plan. The City of Spokane also adopted a WPC-proposed change to its climate policy, requiring examination of the effectiveness of policies included in its climate strategy. WPC analysis was also a part of the most high-profile environmental debate of the year regarding the labeling of biotechnology crops. Our analysis of I-522 was mentioned by media outlets and referenced during the campaign.

The 12th Annual Health Care Conference, WPC updated our popular “Impact of the ACA on Washington State” publication and released the new version that provides a concise review of the law and discusses the impact of the ACA on various demographic groups in our state.

The Center for Education’s Liv Finne reported on the implementation of the new charter school law approved by voters in November 2012. The Center published “How to Open a Charter School in Washington State” and “Summary of the lawsuit against charter schools.” The Center also published numerous blog posts describing the plans and hopes of school districts and communities applying to open charter schools to disadvantaged school children across the state. The Center also examined charter school funding to ensure charter school students receive equitable funding, as required by the charter school law.

In 2013, as part of WPC’s Initiative 1240 Follow-Up Project, the Center for Education’s Coles Center for Government Reform

63 percent of statewide voters followed our recommendation to reject Initiative 517 (changes to the initiative system) saving the state and businesses years of costly litigation to determine if the measure infringed on private property rights. Voters in Yakima and Spokane also followed our recommendation to enact a local supermajority vote requirement to raise taxes.

Lawmakers continued to show interest in Center Director Jason Mercier’s proposal to replace the state’s hated Business & Occupation tax with a Single Business Tax, providing us the opportunity to present on the issue at legislative work sessions.

Three bills also passed the legislature and were signed into law by Governor Inslee in 2013 reflecting WPC recommendations: providing additional transparency for state capital and transportation projects (HB 2058), requiring an inventory of state fees (SB 5751) and requiring a performance statement before tax preferences are enacted (SB 5882).