

Policy Guide for Washington State Introduction to the 6th Edition

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POLICY GUIDE INTRODUCTION

This 6th edition of the *Policy Guide for Washington State* has been revised, updated and released. It contains the latest research to provide elected officials and the general public with sound ideas that benefit all people living in our state. Here is a quick overview of each chapter.

Policy ideas based on solid data and which enhance freedom and opportunity allow individuals, families and communities to make decisions for themselves without interfering with the rights of others, while providing safety-net services for those most in need.

Chapter 1 provides ways to control the growth in public spending so it meets the legitimate needs of government, rather than simply spending the maximum elected officials can get in taxes. Each year state spending increases faster than the natural rise in inflation and population, showing that officials routinely take more money from working families and business owners than they really need.

Chapter 2 recommends that lawmakers provide the people with tax relief. By lightening the financial burden they impose, elected leaders can show they understand the concerns of working families. Tax relief increases take-home pay for everyone and shows respect for the dignity of workers. In particular, reducing broad-based taxation like sales and property rates allows most of the benefit to go to low-income households.

Chapter 3 shows how new technology and individual action can do more to protect the environment than aggressive top-down programs. Harsh environmental rules impose huge costs on communities and business owners but often do little to solve real-world problems. This Policy Guide shows how people responding to voluntary incentives in their daily lives can do more for the planet than massive government programs.

Chapter 4 provides practical ideas for expanding individual and family access to affordable health care. The core principle is to put patients in charge of their own health care dollars, rather than forcing people into public entitlement programs. Repealing mandates and legal bans on how patients can buy affordable coverage results in lower costs and wider choices in receiving medical care.

Chapter 5 presents data that promotes family choice in education, whether through public charter schools, tax-credit scholarships, family-based vouchers or online learning. In all these cases key decisions about education are made by parents, who can direct public resources in ways that best serve children, instead of simply adding money to the local school district monopoly.

Chapter 6 recommends constructive ways state leaders can re-build public trust in government. Over time the legislature and state agencies have become hide-bound and insensitive, as special interests push their own agendas at the expense of the needs of the public. Greater openness and honesty in how state leaders conduct the people's business would help restore people's faith in their public servants.

Chapters 7 and 8 provide sound recommendations for promoting job-creation and economic growth. These ideas are not simply about making money, they are intended to help state leaders show respect for the life choices of citizens. Widening the sphere of private action allows people to plan, build and succeed for themselves, demonstrating that government exists to serve them – not the other way around.

Chapter 9 provides practical ideas for increasing mobility and freedom of movement. Many elected leaders insist on trying to “force people out of their cars,” while the vast majority of the public simply want affordable, flexible and efficient transportation. There is always a role for public transit, but research in this chapter shows how state leaders can deliver on what they routinely promise; congestion relief and public roads that are free-flowing and open to all.

Finally, Chapter 10 shows how state leaders can be responsive to the needs of farmers and rural communities. This is not just a matter of recognizing another economic interest. Agriculture is a way of life, one that is essential to defeating hunger and providing food security for everyone. Agricultural production contributes to the health of the entire state, and to that of people living in national and world markets that benefit from the produce of Washington farms and ranches.

As these brief summaries show, the theme of the *Policy Guide for Washington State* is to promote growth, opportunity and self-reliance. Powerful forces in our state seek to increase the control of government over our lives, collect more money through high taxation, and funnel money to entrenched interests that profit from public spending.

The purpose of this book is to help policymakers resist this trend, by providing over three dozen independent, non-partisan and unbiased policy recommendations, backed by objective research, that benefit all families and communities in our state.

By adopting these fact-based ideas, state leaders can provide effective public services that allow people to organize their lives, families and communities as they think best, so everyone can thrive within a governing system based on individual rights, mutual respect and ordered liberty.



About Paul Guppy

Paul Guppy is the Vice President for Research at Washington Policy Center. He is a graduate of Seattle University and holds graduate degrees from Claremont Graduate University and the London School of Economics. He worked for 12 years in the U.S. Congress as a Chief of Staff and Legislative Director. As the Vice President for Research, he writes extensively on tax policy, public finance and other issues. He is a frequent commentator on radio and TV news programs, and in newspapers across the state.