

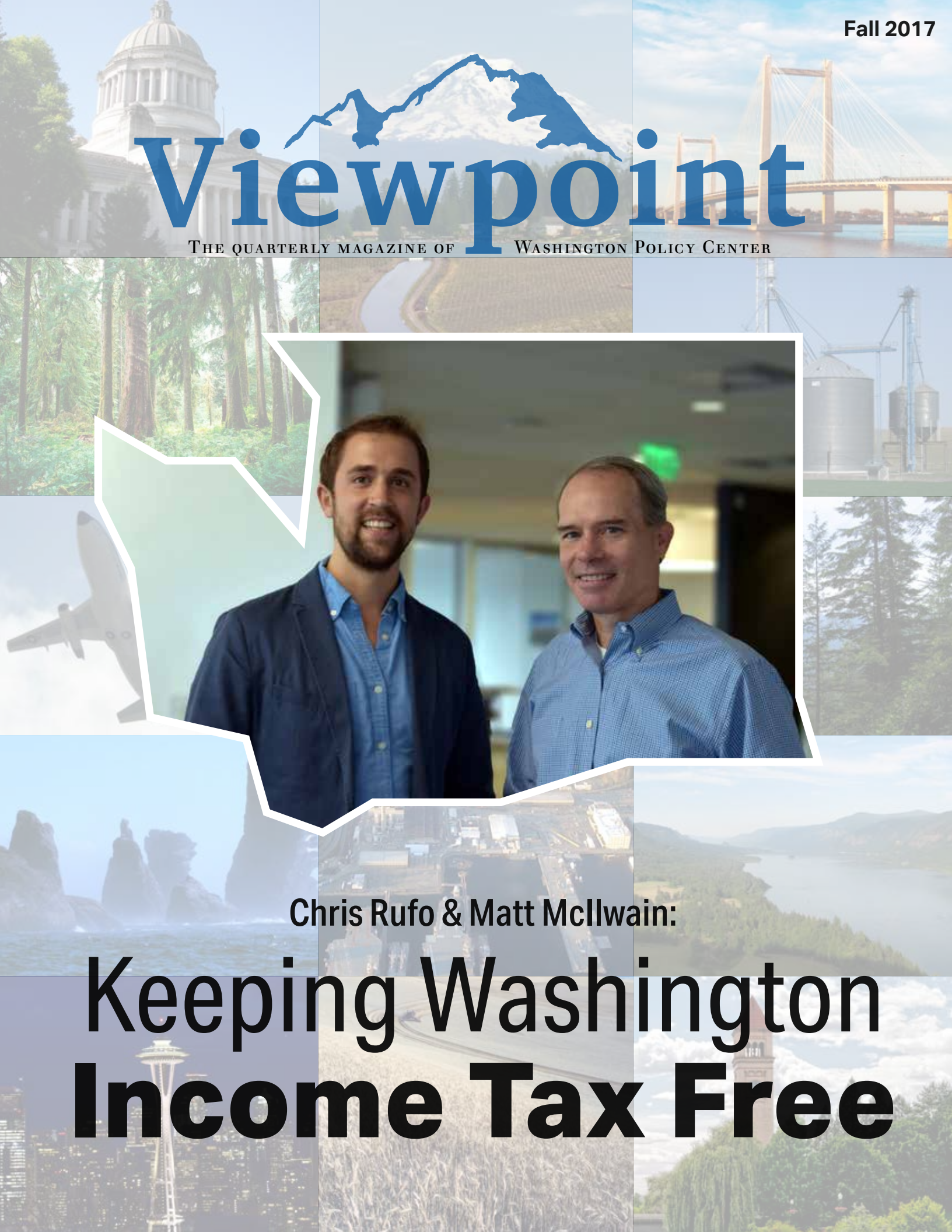
Fall 2017

Viewpoint

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

Chris Rufo & Matt McIlwain:

Keeping Washington Income Tax Free

[illegible][illegible][illegible]The cover features a collage of Washington state imagery: the Capitol dome, Mount Rainier, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, industrial silos, a forest, an airplane, and the Space Needle. A white outline of Washington state is overlaid on the left side.

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Chris Rufo & Matt McIlwain:

Keeping Washington Income Tax Free

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WPC'S SUMMER EVENTS

Thank you to all who attended!



Craig Williamson, *Chairman*
John Otter, *Vice Chairman*
Heidi Stanley, *Treasurer*
Anne Cowles, *Secretary*

Engaging Young Professionals is a key part of WPC's mission, that is why we are proud to feature a letter from Benjamin Petter, Chairman of WPC's Young Professionals program.

Dear Friends:

I hope this finds you well as we wrap up another incredible Washington summer.

We are so fortunate to live in a beautiful, safe, and prosperous state. We enjoy countless opportunities to celebrate our lives with nature, family, and friends alongside a robust economic environment. We have the opportunity to grow and share, and to enjoy a diverse selection of goods, services, and experiences.

I spent the summer building my business, relaxing in Chelan, learning to solo skydive, riding my motorcycle, and enjoying the company of the people I love. I consider myself fortunate, and I appreciate having the incentive to "work and play hard," as I get a much more fulfilling life experience from the journey.

Taking a moment to appreciate all the things that help make our lives great reminds me of how important it is for us to continue to share this philosophy. We continue to strive to expand our ability to create value to our fellow citizens and, likewise, enjoy the many collective benefits of a free society.

No other system in history has created, scaled, and distributed prosperity as effectively as free markets. However, this system is often wrongfully condemned, and we see this constantly in our abundant Washington lifestyle. Well-intended policies with major unintended consequences continue to dilute the collective interest to contribute to society. Slowly, the most important merits of our society are eroding to special interests and misguided economic theory.

Fortunately, the smart folks at Washington Policy Center are looking after us with great research on the important topics which will affect us the most. Car Tabs, Single-Payer Healthcare, and Seattle's Income Tax all come to mind. Find WPC's research on these topics in this issue.

Of course, great research is meaningless without awareness. Please help us continue to improve the conversations on these issues. Spread the word of our events, our research, and our approach. Educate yourself on the issues, and continue to discuss your views. Promote a better world through awareness, transparency, and empowerment.

Thank you for reading, and please enjoy this issue of *Viewpoint*.



Benjamin Petter
WPC's YP Chairman



Richard Alvord
Bill Baldwin
Dave Barber
Kevin Bouchey
Roger Bowlin
Artie Buerk
Jim Coles
William Conner
John Connors
Kathy Connors
Hon. Kemper Freeman Jr.
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Viewpoint is the quarterly magazine of Washington Policy Center, an independent Washington state-focused think tank.

Viewpoint designed and edited by **Molly Sheerer & August Bress**

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Exclusive benefits of Patron Membership include:

- Invitations to private events, such as our Holiday Appreciation Luncheon
- Quarterly updates from our President, Dann Mead Smith
- Membership lapel pin

Washington Policy Center depends entirely upon the generosity of our members – people who understand that free markets are superior to a government-rigged economy, and liberty is the free air people must breathe.

So far in 2017, over 150 members have committed to the Patron Membership – this number is growing everyday, please consider joining us and making a lasting impact on the lives of those in our state!

If you are interested in learning more about joining Washington Policy Center and our Patron Membership, please contact:

WPC's Development Director Sydney Jansen,
at sjansen@washingtonpolicy.org or (206) 937-9691.

Right-to-Work is right for Washington



BY ERIN SHANNON, Director, Center for Small Business & Labor Reform



The issue of right-to-work, the legal right of a person to hold a job without having to pay dues or fees to a union, is gaining prominence across the country as state leaders strive to improve job creation, promote economic development and attract new businesses. Since 2012, six states (Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri) have passed right-to-work laws, also called workplace freedom or workplace choice, with more states introducing legislation and debating the issue every year.

Today there are 28 states with a right-to-work law protecting workers' right to choose. Washington is one 21 states that does not have a right-to-work law.

A right-to-work law does not prohibit employees from joining a labor union, nor does it prohibit them from paying voluntary union dues. Labor unions still operate in right-to-work states, but the law protects each person's freedom of association by prohibiting the payment of union dues as a condition of employment.

The fairness principle that right-to-work laws seek to protect is that no one should be forced to choose between paying money to a cause he or she might oppose and making a living. Joining a union shouldn't be based on fear.

Right-to-work laws do not ban unions or prevent them from serving the interests of their members. Right-to-work laws do not force unions to represent non-paying "free riders" who take advantage of a union's representation but do not pay their share. Rather, right-to-work laws require unions to give workers a choice about whether to financially support those efforts.

Studies show that states with right-to-work laws attract more new business than states without such laws. Right-to-work states typically have a better business climate than non-right-to-work states, and employers value the labor-management predictability inherent in stable right-to-work states.

In 2015 Washington Policy Center commissioned a study to measure the economic and employment impacts if Washington were to become a right-to-work state. The findings are dramatic. Like other right-to-work states, Washington would benefit from better economic growth, higher wages and more employment under a right-to-law. In just five years, almost 120,000 new jobs would be created

and the state's wage and salary incomes would be \$11.1 billion higher.

The fairness inherent in right-to-work laws is clear—workers should have the freedom to decide whether they want to support a union financially. If workers find sufficient value in the representation and services provided by a union, they will voluntarily pay union dues to ensure the continuation of those services. If they do not believe they are receiving sufficient value, or if they oppose the political activities of the union, they should not be forced to support the union.

Similarly, the economic arguments supporting a right-to-work law in Washington are simple—as more states increase their competitiveness by adopting right-to-work laws, Washington's non-right-to-work status is increasingly hampering our state's competitiveness. When comparing state business climates, Washington enjoys high marks for not having an income tax. Adding a right-to-work law would do even more to enhance Washington state's economic competitiveness, and it would promote fairness and social justice for workers.



Rebecca Friedrichs, lead plaintiff in the landmark Supreme Court case *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, leading right to work advocate, and Keynote Speaker at WPC's 2017 Eastern Washington Annual Dinner. Friedrichs is also featured in WPC's new video on Right-to-Work.



U.S. mayors on climate: This time will be different



BY TODD MYERS, Director, Center for the Environment



NATIONAL REVIEW



This article was originally published in *National Review*

It happened in 2007, but it could have been last week. Climate change, Michael Bloomberg told the audience, is an example of cities' "leading where Washington has not": "We don't wait for others to act," he announced. "We lead by example."

In 2007, New York mayor Bloomberg pledged his city would meet the emissions targets of the Kyoto Protocol. Back then, more than 1,000 mayors signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. If President George W. Bush wouldn't follow the Kyoto Protocol, the mayors proclaimed, they surely would.

When Kyoto's 2012 carbon-reduction deadline arrived, however, virtually all these cities had failed to live up to the pledge their mayors had made, missing the Kyoto targets badly.

So now Bloomberg and mayors around the country are replacing those old promises with new ones. Cities are now signing the "We Are Still In" pledge to meet the Paris Accord's CO₂ emissions targets. Their history of failure demonstrates how hollow the new promises are.

Launched in 2005 by Seattle mayor Greg Nickels, the Climate Protection Agreement committed cities to the Kyoto targets to "reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012." Mayors signed on in cities across the U.S., including New York, Chicago, and more than 1,000 other municipalities. The results are instructive.

Seattle, where the effort was launched, missed the goal badly. In a 2015 report, the city admitted it "reduced GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions by 1 percent from 1990 to 2012, falling short of the target."

To be fair, at least Seattle tracked its own failure. In contrast, I called the more than 30 other cities in Washington that signed the Kyoto-targets agreement to see if they had lived up to their promises. Two-thirds of them said something akin to: "We don't know what you are talking about." After sending the initial press release proclaiming their environmental commitment, the vast majority of city officials simply ignored their commitments.

These results are not unique to Washington.

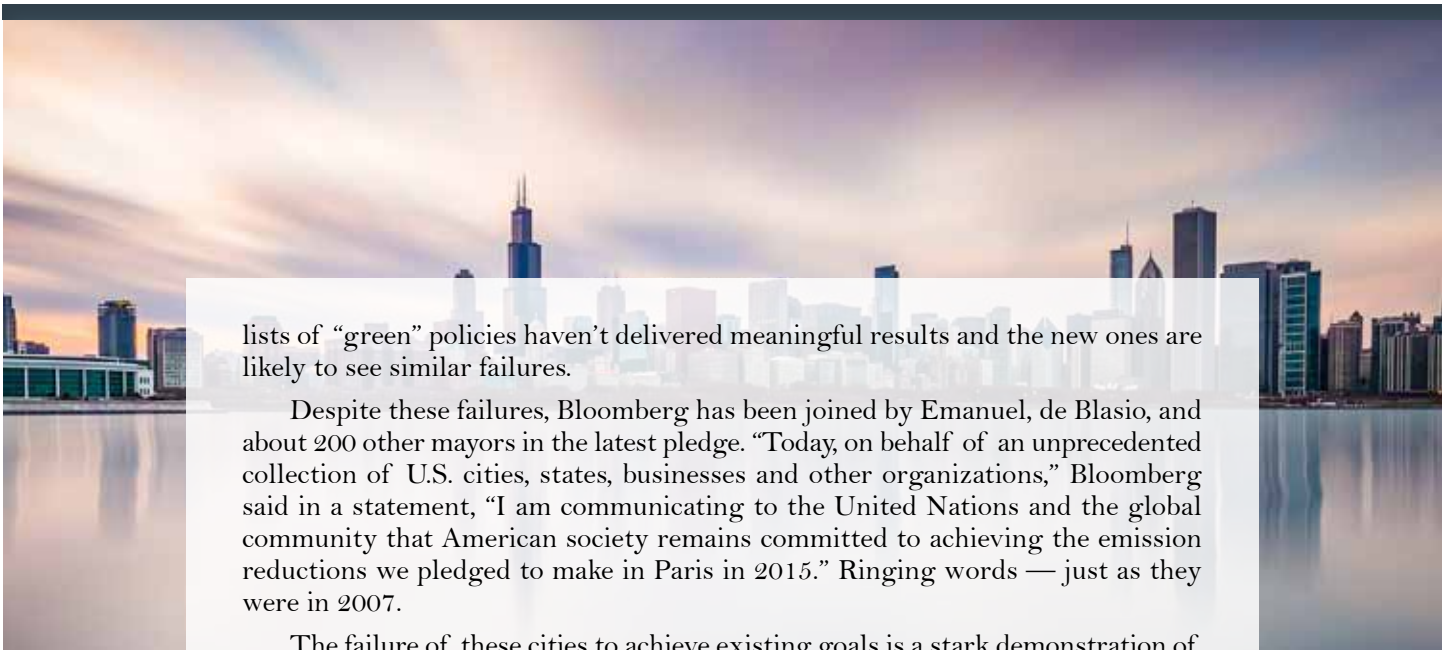
In 2007, Mayor Bloomberg went beyond the Kyoto goals, pledging that by 2030, New York would reduce the city's CO₂ emissions to 30 percent below the 2005 level. Thanks to the economic downturn, NYC got off to a good start. After 2012, however, emissions actually increased. At the current rate, New York will miss Bloomberg's 2030 target.

Bloomberg's successor, Bill de Blasio, made the targets even more unreasonable by promising an 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050. After just a few years, the city is already more than 4 percent behind and will need to reduce emissions at more than four times the current rate to have any hope of meeting de Blasio's promised goal.

Chicago's results are even more dismal. Mayor Richard Daley pledged Chicago would reduce emissions in the city by 25 percent in 2020, compared with 1990 levels. According to the most recent data, Chicago's emissions are 10 percent above where they need to be to meet that promise. The city's "Climate Action Plan" web page admits: "If Chicago continues on its current path . . . its emissions would grow to 39.3 million metric tons of CO₂ by 2020. That would actually be 22 percent above 1990 levels, and a remarkable 62 percent above the promised target."

Chicago's current mayor, Rahm Emanuel, recently set a new goal. In an executive order on June 7, Emanuel committed Chicago to reducing citywide greenhouse-gas emissions to the levels in the Paris Accord — about 26 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. Ironically, that new pledge is actually weaker than the previous goal.

Even with the weaker targets, Chicago is unlikely to meet the goal. As the city's own report admits, emissions are likely to increase due to the continuing economic recovery. The only significant reductions during the last two decades came as a result of the economic downturn, not public policy. Previous laundry



lists of “green” policies haven’t delivered meaningful results and the new ones are likely to see similar failures.

Despite these failures, Bloomberg has been joined by Emanuel, de Blasio, and about 200 other mayors in the latest pledge. “Today, on behalf of an unprecedented collection of U.S. cities, states, businesses and other organizations,” Bloomberg said in a statement, “I am communicating to the United Nations and the global community that American society remains committed to achieving the emission reductions we pledged to make in Paris in 2015.” Ringing words — just as they were in 2007.

The failure of these cities to achieve existing goals is a stark demonstration of the gap between environmental rhetoric and results from those who style themselves as environmental heroes. Yet rather than holding politicians accountable for these failures, environmental groups actually praised the new promises.

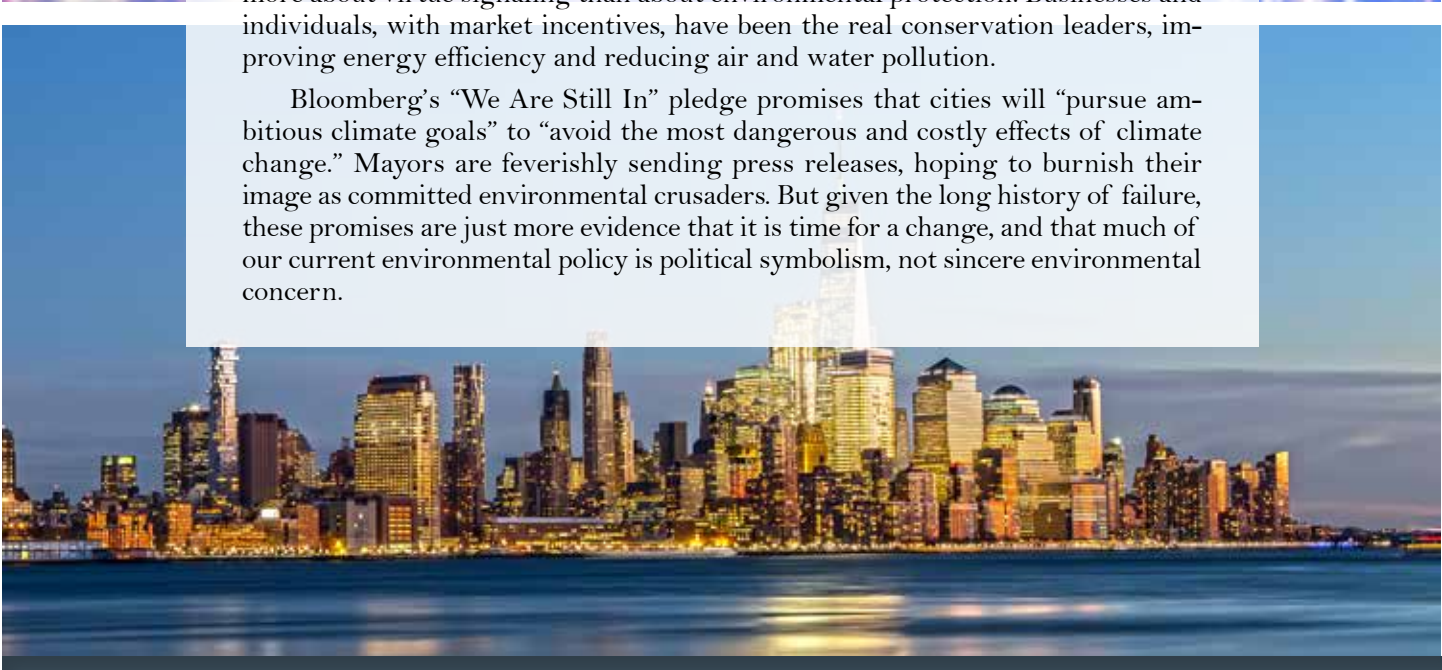
With such perverse incentives, we shouldn’t be surprised at these failures. Politicians benefit politically when they make dramatic — but unrealistic — environmental pledges. When those promises are broken, they are never mentioned again, and politicians pay no price.

By way of contrast, businesses pay a real price if they are not energy-efficient. Farmers pay for using water or fertilizer inefficiently. Drivers feel the hit at the pump when they use too much fuel. In the real world, personal incentives, not political motives, drive efforts to do more with less that improve the health of the environment.

Conservatives are often intimidated by the Left’s environmental boasting. Too often, conservatives respond to environmental concerns with arguments about the economic cost or jobs. These are legitimate concerns, but we should also call the Left’s bluff.

Despite their self-congratulatory press releases, the record of the environmental Left in the past few decades is abysmal, as environmentalism has become more about virtue signaling than about environmental protection. Businesses and individuals, with market incentives, have been the real conservation leaders, improving energy efficiency and reducing air and water pollution.

Bloomberg’s “We Are Still In” pledge promises that cities will “pursue ambitious climate goals” to “avoid the most dangerous and costly effects of climate change.” Mayors are feverishly sending press releases, hoping to burnish their image as committed environmental crusaders. But given the long history of failure, these promises are just more evidence that it is time for a change, and that much of our current environmental policy is political symbolism, not sincere environmental concern.





Not Legal. Not Needed. Not In Your Best Interest.

The fight against Seattle's income tax and why all of Washington should be wary

WPC Board Member Matt McIlwain, plaintiff Chris Rufo, and the Opportunity for All coalition are fighting Seattle's proposed income tax

Washington is one of nine states that does not have an income tax, and that benefit has been touted as Washington's, and Seattle's, greatest advantage in attracting businesses, talent, and families to our great state. This summer, the Seattle City Council unanimously passed an income tax. However, the Washington state constitution forbids this, so now a legal battle is about to ensue. Groups like the Washington Policy Center have come together to fight this issue. WPC staff (*noted as WPC below*) met with two of the men involved in one of the lawsuits; they're involved with the Opportunity for All Coalition – Matt McIlwain (*noted as MM below*), WPC Board Member and Madrona Venture Group Managing Director, and Christopher Rufo (*noted as CR below*), documentary filmmaker and WPC Young Professionals Member. Matt is one of the leaders of the Seattle-based Opportunity for All Coalition, and Christopher is a plaintiff in the lawsuit.

WPC: What's going on with the income tax in Washington state?

MM: The Seattle City Council passed an income tax that's a potential hinderance to our state's growth, so I'm working on a coalition called the Opportunity For All Coalition, that is focused on defeating the city income tax that's been passed.

WPC: How are you involved with the income tax issue?

CR: I think that the reason I'm passionate about the issue and involved in the income tax case, is that I think what attracted me to Seattle, what brought me here to the kind of environment was this low tax, high growth, very entrepreneurial city, a climate that was very attractive for me running my business. And then moving from California where you have the same kind of policies that they are proposing now with the income tax, the minimum wage, a lot of the labor policies, rent control. And I think that the income tax is the tip of the spear in this fight. I've joined the coalition, Opportunity for All, as a plaintiff.

WPC: How could Seattle's income tax impact those across the state of Washington?

MM: Well, the reason that everybody in Washington State should pay attention to what's happening in Seattle is twofold. One, I mentioned earlier the importance of economic growth in the whole state, and so these kinds of policies, even if it's initially isolated to the City of Seattle and the regions around that, is really going to affect the whole state from an economic growth, and attracting talent. The other piece, though, is that income taxes end up going everywhere.

There's two ways that that could happen here. One way is that if the City of Seattle ends up being deemed it's legal for them to have an income tax, we think that's highly unlikely, but if it was, then other cities throughout the state could say, "Oh, here's a new form of tax revenue" and they could implement their own income tax. Potentially more risky for us is that you could then create a separate state income tax.

We actually might end up with two different types of income taxes. A state income tax, and city income taxes in certain circumstances, and that the state income tax would obviously apply to anybody, whether they live in Pasco or Kennewick or Bellingham or Vancouver.

CR: Well the Seattle City income tax is the test case for an income tax statewide. This is not conservative fear mongering. You can look at it from our state representatives and some in the legislature. You can look at the rhetoric from Governor Inslee, and they'll say, the best way to get an income tax is to flip the state Senate from Republican to Democrat. That's their explicit goal. I think that the City Council people in Seattle were in a way on the forefront of that. It's the most progressive city, most liberal city in the state. And they're looking at it as a test case to see, to test the waters with the courts. So they're hoping that the Supreme Court has changed in it's composition since these cases were last tested, and that they'll overturn essentially a hundred years of case law.

My hope is that the Supreme Court will recognize the last century of case law and the very simple language of the state constitution, but clearly the liberal progressives see an opportunity to test this case. I would take them at their word. I have no doubt if this income tax in the City of Seattle passes, and if we lose the special election in the 45th Senate District, that we will see an income tax being sent to the governor. I think that this is critically important and this is kind of like the Battle at the Alamo for keeping our state competitive, keeping our state prosperous, and keeping our state a beacon of opportunity in the United States.

WPC: Why should those who aren't immediately affected by the tax care?

MM: Well, I think there's two reasons that everybody should care about the City of Seattle income tax. First of all, every income tax that's ever been created ultimately applies to virtually all of the citizens. So, for instance, today while the Seattle tax is targeted at people that are higher earners, it also could be extended to all of the citizens. In addition, while it's only focused on residents of Seattle today, they could easily extend it to anybody who works in Seattle. So, you've got this history of any kind of a tax, like an income tax, ends up being spread out to everybody.

The second is that an income tax is a big competitive advantage in the state of Washington, in that we don't have an income tax. It's why so much talent is coming to the state, so many job opportunities are being created, and it's why we're seeing incredible economic growth and success in our state. So, everybody should be concerned that having an income tax would be a drag on the job creation that's led to the lowest unemployment rate in the history of the state, and other factors that are driving our economic growth.

WPC: You say it's not needed, not legal, and not in Washingtonians' best interest....let's start with why it's not needed?

MM: Well, the reason we believe it's not necessary is because we've got a broad base of taxes already today that are driving substantial growth in tax revenues for both the city and the state. The state's growth is projected to be another six billion dollars over the next four years, so going from that 38 billion dollars that we are at today to 44 billion dollars in just a four-year period of time. Similarly, the City of Seattle's grown from four billion in its revenues to 5.5 billion and again, has a very positive growth projection in the future.

Then, the other question that we have to ask is, "Well, is that enough? Is that too much? Is that too little?" I think what we can note there is that areas like education have been prioritized and you're always going to need to prioritize what you do with your taxpayer dollars. But I think most people would agree that it's more about the prioritization than it is about just taking more tax revenue from the citizens.

Now, let's take a look at the other side of that which is if it's not needed from a tax revenue perspective, what about the question, the second question that you're going to ask me, which is why is it not in the best interest? Why it's not in the best interest is because the taxes that we are taking out of the system are going to discourage people from hiring. It's going to discourage people from moving to the state, it's going to discourage investment in the state, and all of those things ultimately hurt tax revenues.

CR: The income tax is not needed because the City of Seattle has a fully stocked budget.

WPC: Not legal?

MM: Well, there's a whole legal set of questions, and that's really where we're focusing most of our energies right now, is the combination of telling stories of why this is not in the best interests but also making the case in front of judges that it's not legal. So, let's be specific about what's not legal. The state of Washington says that you can only tax something locally, like income, if you've been specifically authorized to tax it.

Secondly, there's actually a state statute, state law which says that local jurisdictions can't tax net income. Those two statutory reasons are enough, and from our perspective, you don't need to go beyond that. In fact, there's a term called "constitutional avoidance" which is the concept that if you can just start and end at the statutory issues and resolve a legal matter around statutory issues, you don't need to go to constitutional questions. There is a possibility that you would go to a constitutional question as well, and in that case, our state constitution says that any tax on income, property, and income being a form of property, must be taxed uniformly.

In other words, you can't just tax one group and not other groups, and if you tax all groups, you have to tax them at the same rate. I don't think we'll get to that issue, we don't need to get to that issue to resolve this from a legal

perspective, but we really have multiple aspects around why the City of Seattle's income tax is illegal.

Interestingly enough, we think the city knows that themselves. We think that they've done their own research. They're claiming that that's information that's now privileged because there's these court challenges, but we think they've done their own research and realized that it was illegal, but they chose to spend their time and our taxpayer dollars anyways, to go forward with the law and the legal challenges that have now ensued.

CR: The city income tax is not legal under state law which bans cities from implementing income tax, and it's not legal under the state constitution which prohibits a graduated income tax.

WPC: Not in residents' best interest?

MM: So, we think that the system that we have in place today, which includes a sales tax, a tax on business revenues. Then, we also have property taxes and we have other kinds of fees and services like car tabs that I know that everybody of late is really glad that they're paying. All of those things are sources of revenue for the state and the more you put more taxes on people, what tends to happen is it discourages investment.

CR: The income tax is not in people's best interest because it will undermine the very reasons for Seattle's prosperity today.

WPC: What's next for this issue and how can folks get involved?

MM: That's the timeframe in terms of what was passed. Now there's the timeframe in terms of the legal challenge, and what's interesting is that the city has been asked by the judge to make their case in a written form, it's called a brief, at the end of September. Then, the different lawsuits of which the Opportunity For All Coalition is ours, and we think that's the broadest coalition trying to bring together the most diverse set of perspectives on why this is an ill-conceived law, we will have a chance to respond in October.

There's a number of ways to be involved. There is a website called OpportunityForAll.us, where there is going to be content throughout the fall in terms of opportunity stories that we're going to talk about, different citizens in the state, and their perspectives on why this income tax is A, not necessary, and B, not a good idea.

We also have a number of social media connections and so when you are hearing about things and seeing things, spread the word and tell your friends that this is something that they need to be concerned about and why. There's also, of course, great organizations like the Washington Policy Center that are doing really terrific work on research and data gathering and trying to frame the issues around this important topic. I've been a big fan and advocate of Washington Policy Center for years. I have the privilege of being on the board, so I would really encourage you to continue to look to the content that they're coming up with to follow this particular important tax issue.

CR: If people read this and they want to get involved, I'd say there's really a few ways you can get involved. One is, I think that we need to not give up on Seattle as conservatives and free market thinkers. There's a real tendency for us to just throw our hands up in the air and give up on the City of Seattle. But I think that what this income tax shows is that the policies



Pictured: McIlwain (Left) and Rufo (Right)

are going so far to the left that I think there's going to come a point where people are tired of it, where the liberal contingent on the council is over-reaching and over-stepping. I think that we're almost there. I was very interested in Sara Nelson's City Council race for example. She didn't make it to the final run-off but she had fairly strong support and ran explicitly as a small business candidate.

Secondly, let other people know by breaking up this culture of fear, that it's okay to speak out, and that there are like minded people, and then we'll attract more people. Once we can break through that it's okay to have these positions, I think that we'll see more people who are maybe holding back or in the shadows come out and support the cause. Third, I think you can get involved with the coalition. The coalition is looking for people to contribute their talents, their ideas, to contribute content. The coalition has put together a great team. So we're excited to connect with anyone that wants to contribute.

Lastly, I'll be at the hearing on November 17th in Seattle and I encourage folks to attend and show your support for keeping Washington a great state to both work and live.

WPC: Anything we haven't covered that you think Washington residents should know when it comes to this issue?

MM: I think the other thing that's worth knowing is a lot of times people don't appreciate that if I'm a small business and the small business is structured as an LLC or an S Corp, that income flows to your own personal taxes, you would be impacted by this tax. Similarly, if I have a certain investment like I owned my own home and I've owned it for a number of years, and it's appreciated in value, when I sold my home, that income would be taxed here.

So, there's a series of things that are hidden in the way this tax is structured that could actually impact a lot of citizens in Seattle, so well before we get to the point where the tax gets spread out and applied to more and more citizens from an income level perspective, there's a lot of things that are hidden in it for small businesses, for people that own their homes, or other investments, and they will be surprised if it ends up being maintained.

Sound Transit can provide car tab relief and walk away unscathed



BY MARIYA FROST, Director, Coles Center for Transportation



**PUGET SOUND
BUSINESS JOURNAL**



This article was originally published in *The Puget Sound Business Journal*

There is good news for families paying inflated car tab fees, and it doesn't require waiting for the next legislative session. Sound Transit can provide car tab relief overnight and walk away financially unscathed.

Unfortunately, transit officials worked hard to secure the overcharges and continue to hold a tight grip on car tab money flowing to the agency – outside of public reach. They deflect public frustration and say the outcry over unfair overcharges is just temporary sticker shock. This is insulting to voters. People are rightly angry because they feel cheated and dismissed.

During this last legislative session, many of those same people reached out to their state legislators to fight against the powerful agency after decades of broken promises and violations of public trust. Time ran out and politics got in the way. This is disappointing, but it is also an opportunity for Sound Transit to do the right thing rather than pretend there is no fix.

Sound Transit officials could provide relief immediately, without legislative action, by paying off their old Sound Move bonds now rather than in 2028. Eliminating old debt early is called defeasance and is a provision that is built into Sound Transit's bond contracts. Doing so would remove the 0.3 percent car tab rate and associated bond debt from Sound Transit's books. The remaining Sound Transit 3 car tab fee of 0.8 percent, passed by voters last year, would switch to the more accurate 2006 depreciation schedule in state law. Taxpayers would save an estimated \$2 billion in tax overcharges.

This solution strikes a fair balance between the Democrats' House Bill 2201, which promotes the use of the fairer 2006 depreciation schedule, and the Republicans' Senate Bill 5893, which seeks greater tax relief by reducing the car tab rate. It's a win-win-win.

Democrats and Republicans would see both of their reforms move forward, taxpayers would get significant relief from the elimination of the 0.3 percent car tab and fair taxation of the remaining 0.8 percent, and Sound Transit would start to rebuild the trust they have lost with the public.

The outcome would be a healthy change in Sound Transit's attitude toward spending our money. Sound Transit officials regularly boost budgets and say that it is reasonable and affordable to do so. Last March, the agency dipped into more than half of all contingency funds for East Link on I-90 to cover a \$225 million cost overrun – before they even started construction. The agency did not reopen bidding to seek the best value for taxpayers. Instead, Board members decided themselves that the cost was "fair and reasonable."

And we can't forget last year's excessive grand-opening party for Seattle's Capitol Hill and UW light rail stations, which alone cost taxpayers nearly \$1 million. Sound Transit officials felt it was perfectly reasonable to spend \$28,000 on tote bags, \$130,198 for an advertising campaign, and thousands more for buttons, lanyards, and paper trains.

Given these double standards about public spending, it is no surprise that legislators doubted Sound Transit officials when they reported that a car tab fix just wasn't affordable.

Rather than waiting for legislators to try again in 2018, taxpayers should expect accountability and integrity from Sound Transit now. The agency has repeatedly shown that it has enough savings and padding built into its financial model to correct this inequity, without deferring projects or impairing bond contracts.

What we have learned is that transit officials make changes to budgets, timelines, and projects, quickly mitigating shortfalls in revenue, when they determine the changes are in the agency's best interest. Perhaps it's time for the Sound Transit Board to re-evaluate whether keeping a tight grip on tax overcharges that do not belong to them is in the agency's best interest as well. Is obstinacy about being fair and providing car tab relief helping or hurting their mission?

With multiple public complaints and a pending Senate legislative investigation underway, the agency cannot expect to survive if it continues taking advantage of the public.

Farmers are responsible stewards of environment



BY MADILYNNE CLARK, Agriculture Policy Research Director

This op-ed was originally published in *The Spokesman Review*



THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW



At one of my first fires in Eastern Oregon working as a rangeland firefighter, I looked over my shoulder and saw a group of ranchers, recognizable by their hats and boots, hiking quickly up the mountain. As the flames raced through the sagebrush, the ranchers' passion was obvious. Their drive reflected not only their desire to protect their livelihood and cattle, but also the innate care they feel for the land they graze and farm.

Yet ranchers and farmers who care for the land so passionately are often regarded by urban foodies and greenie activists as the foe of the Earth. That common misconception is the result of the inflammatory propaganda attacking farmers that has taken hold in mainstream media and on college campuses.

In falsely claiming farmers disregard water, land and wildlife, anti-farming activists ignore two simple truths. First, farm families live on and often own the very land they are accused of damaging. Second, many of these families have protected the land for generations and they intend for their farm to continue successfully for many years to come.

It should be made clear exactly how much farmers truly care for their land.

As director of Washington Policy Center's new Initiative on Agriculture, I have the privilege to meet with hundreds of farmers and ranchers from around the state. Dairy farmers, orchardists, cattle ranchers, blueberry growers, mint farmers, vegetable producers, wheat farmers and more all have a story to tell about how they are committed to caring for the land.

Through my work, I met an orchardist who has implemented multiple strategies to conserve water, an organic vegetable grower who implements many of the same practices on his conventional acreage, and a dairy farmer who uses precision technology to apply no more chemical than is needed to his field.

I recently met with Eastern Washington cattle rancher Dick Coon, who fit the stereotype, boots and all. Yet he quickly debunked the urban vision of the country hick who exploits the land. This Washington rancher, like most I know, was knowledgeable about the problems facing the environment, well-educated on the best science for managing his land, and truly cared for every inch of his property.

For example, he wisely moves his cattle to new pasture every 24 to 48 hours, giving each field a rest while providing healthy and affordable food for his cattle. However, the cattle are not the only beneficiaries. By carefully monitoring grazing areas along stream banks, the fish also benefit.

His timed movement of cows near streams imitates the natural pattern of grazing by bison, elk and other hooved mammals that improve the ecological diversity of the streams.

Fish biologists have found that because of the cows' managed presence along streams, the size and diversity of the fish within the stream running through this ranch was well above the average of non-grazed areas. As the rancher put it, "Cows are the best all-terrain range management vehicles available."

A lifetime of working with farmers has shown me that farmers care more for the environment than any regulator, lawmaker or urban social activist ever will. Farmers do more than just talk about the problems facing the environment. Every day they live and work on their farms, caring for the environment, in the belief that the next generation, and then the next, will want to continue the family business, because the land, air, water and biodiversity remain intact.

The same is true of dairy farmers, orchardists, organic vegetable growers, wheat farmers, spear-mint growers, hop farmers and the entire community of 36,000 farmers and ranchers in our state. Environmentalists in Seattle are not the only ones who care about protecting the earth. In fact, our state's best environmentalists are the people who love, live with and work on the land every day.



U.S. Supreme Court raises hopes of parents who want better schools



BY LIV FINNE, Director, Center for Education

This op-ed was originally published in *The Tri-City Herald*



Tri-City Herald



Two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have raised hopes for parents seeking a better education for their children. In the first, issued June 26th, the Court decided the Blaine Amendment in Missouri's constitution couldn't be used to deny public funding to a religious non-profit to improve child safety in a preschool playground. The case is *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, 15-577.

The Court ruled that, since the playground safety program is a generally available public benefit open to all groups, it would be "odious" to discriminate against members of Trinity Lutheran Church simply because of their religious affiliation.

The ruling is a serious blow to defenders of the Blaine Amendment, an anti-religious provision that is incorporated into the constitutions of 38 states.

Blaine Amendments are a 19th century relic of anti-religious bigotry. After the Civil War, Maine's Senator James G. Blaine wanted to amend the federal constitution to deny public funding to "sectarian," mainly Catholic, private schools. His federal effort failed, but Senator Blaine succeeded in requiring new states to accept his amendment as a condition of joining the union.

Backers of the Blaine Amendment were motivated by hatred for the large numbers of poor Catholic immigrants who arrived in America during the 19th century. Today, opponents of school choice use the Blaine Amendment in states that have it to prevent parents from using public funds to seek a better education for their children.

In the second ruling, issued June 27th, the Supreme Court said a Colorado court must reconsider its decision to ban a family voucher program in Douglas County schools. Legal experts predict the lower court will be required to restore Douglas County's popular education vouchers, which allowed parents who request them to send their children to high-quality private schools. The case is *Doyle v. Taxpayers for Public Education*, 15-556.

Michael Bindas, a lead attorney representing three Colorado families, said,

"Today's order sends a strong signal that the U.S. Supreme Court will not tolerate the use of Blaine Amendments to exclude religious options from school choice programs."

Much has changed in American society since the 19th century. Overt anti-religious bigotry has declined, yet powerful unions and the public school establishment routinely cite the Blaine Amendment as their reason for blocking education choice for families.

Still, in many places school choice is routine and non-controversial. Today many states offer parents school vouchers, tax credit scholarships and education savings accounts to help pay tuition at private schools. After all, letting parents guide the education of their children is hardly a radical idea. Parents of college-age kids do it every day.

In addition, many advanced countries use public funds to send children to private schools. Examples include Australia (where 25 percent of children attend private schools using public funds), Belgium (58 percent), Denmark (11 percent), France (16.8 percent), South Korea (21 percent), the Netherlands (76 percent), Spain (24 percent), and the United Kingdom (30 percent).

Even in Washington state, school administrators often direct public money to children attending private religious schools. For example, in 2016 school districts paid \$8.1 million to Catholic, Christian and Jewish institutions to provide special education, day care, preschool, foster care, and other education services (see WAC 392-172A-04040).

In the past, Washington lawmakers have supported proposals to offer families a school voucher to pay the cost of tuition at a private school, similar to federal Pell Grants, which help families defray the cost of college. Unfortunately, these efforts have been blocked by opponents citing Washington's Blaine Amendment.

Now a new day has arrived. These two Supreme Court rulings are sparking excitement among parents and education rights groups across the country. As opponents lose the historically bigoted Blaine Amendment as a talking point against education choice, the idea that parents who want to can use public funds to send their children to a better school has taken a huge leap forward.

Single-payer would devastate the economy



BY DR. ROGER STARK, Health Care Policy Analyst

This article is set to be published in *Forbes*



Forbes

Health care reform has once again taken center stage in U.S. domestic policy debates. Progressives continue to promote the single-payer idea, with former presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders and others, advocating for “Medicare for All.”

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, is a highly complex law and has made our current health care system more confusing. A single-payer system is attractive to many people because of its perceived simplicity – the U.S. government would provide direct health services to all Americans.

We already have two examples of a single-payer system in the U.S. The Veterans Administration (VA) health care system is a pure socialized, single-payer program. Taxpayers fund the system, the hospitals are owned by the government, and the providers are all government employees. Although the VA system has offered good health care to many of our veterans, we have learned recently that on balance the system is plagued with cost overruns, inefficiencies, and prolonged wait times for care.

The second example is Medicare, which began in 1965 and is a single-payer system for seniors, 65 years of age and older. Funding is through payroll taxes, premiums, and an ever increasing percentage of money from federal general taxes. By 1990, spending in Medicare was seven times over the original budget. Medicare is not financially sustainable in its present form.

Like the VA system, Medicare has helped many people, but the cost of “Medicare for All” would devastate the overall economy. The non-partisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB) analyzed Senator Sanders’ proposal from a financial standpoint. He calls for six new or expanded taxes. Everyone would pay 6.2 percent more in payroll tax and 2.2 percent more in income tax.

Higher-income workers would experience four additional taxes. Income taxes would increase, capital gains would be taxed as ordinary income, certain current deductions would be eliminated, and estate taxes would increase.

Even with these expanded taxes, the CRFB reports that multiple analysts, including the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, find Senator Sanders’ calculations to be short by up to \$14 trillion over 10 years.

Canada has had a single-payer system for over 30 years and its experience is revealing. Canadians are proud that every citizen has health insurance. From a cultural standpoint, the principle of universal coverage is a priority for the country. It also makes it easier for the citizens to overlook the problems within the system.

The demand for health care far outweighs the supply of care in Canada. Health care spending is now one of the greatest expenses for every province in the country.

The long wait times in Canada are not in the patient’s best interest and would not be acceptable for the vast majority of Americans. Health care rationing through waiting-lists is effective when supply is overwhelmed by demand. The question is whether government bureaucrats should have the authority to pick and chose what procedures patients receive and who should actually receive those treatments, while others are forced to wait for care.

Canada actually has a two-tiered health care system. Wealthy Canadians who do not want to wait for care and can pay cash, can and do receive treatment in the U.S.

Under a single-payer system, health care spending must compete with all other government activity for funding. This makes health care very political and subject to change with every new budget. It also forces each health care sector, for example hospitals and doctors, to compete with each other for limited money.

A single-payer system sounds like a simple solution to the U.S. health care problem. The reality, however, is far different. Fundamentally, a single-payer system centralizes all health care with the government, is far too expensive, and limits access to health care by rationing. Instead of patients and doctors making key health care decisions, bureaucrats get to make those life and death choices about the kind and amount of health care people receive.



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2017 SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

9/21 - Eastside Breakfast

featuring **Rob McKenna**

9/21 - Young Professionals September

Happy Hour featuring **John Kelly**,
Starbucks' senior vice president of Global
Public Affairs & Social Impact

9/22 - President's Lunch in Bellingham

9/27 - Eastern Washington Annual Dinner

2017 OCTOBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

10/13 - Annual Dinner in Bellevue

10/13 - Young Professionals Annual
Dinner in Bellevue

10/19 - Eastside Breakfast
featuring **Sen. Steve O'Ban**

2017 NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

11/9 - Farm Hall in Tri-Cities

11/16 - Eastside Breakfast
featuring Pierce County
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