

**Income Tax**

Pg 11

**Teen Wage**

Pg 12

**Sound Policy**

*Our new Podcast*

Pg 14



# Viewpoint

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

## The need for Patient-Centered Health Care

Spring 2017

**Letter from the President** ..... 3

**Annual Report Snapshot** ..... 4

**Support WPC** ..... 5

**Agriculture** ..... 6

**Education** ..... 7

**Health Care - Cover Story**..... 8

**Environment** ..... 10

**Government Reform** ..... 11

**Small Business** ..... 12

**Transportation** ..... 13

**Young Professionals** ..... 14

**Spring Calendar** ..... 15

## Jennifer Dunn Thomson Scholarship

In 2005, Washington Policy Center honored Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn with our annual Champion of Freedom Award “for her contributions throughout her distinguished Congressional career.” We continue to honor her legacy by presenting the 7th Annual Jennifer Dunn-Thomson Scholarship. Scholarships up to \$15,000 will be awarded to female college students who embody Jennifer’s values of leadership and commitment to public service and free-market principles.

**Application Deadline: April 15, 2017**

*“This scholarship was a great help in allowing me to continue my education at Washington State University. The legacy of Congresswoman Dunn is that of a trailblazer who worked to make the path easier for women who would come after her. Her compassionate character and dedication to supporting constituents and building meaningful relationships is a powerful inspiration for me and other women. I am extremely grateful to receive this scholarship and honor and will use it to pursue my passion for economic sciences.”*

**- Hayley Hohman**  
2015 scholarship recipient

## Where are they now?



Samantha Bowman  
Microsoft  
YP Board Member



Kendra Clark  
Fried, Frank,  
Harris, Shriver,  
and Jacobson LLP,  
Washington, D.C.



Marina Giloi  
King County  
Department of  
Executive Services,  
Finance and Business  
Operations Division



Stephanie George  
University of  
Montana School  
of Law



Hayley Hohman  
Pursuing MA  
in Economics -  
University of Texas  
at Austin



Sophia Steele  
Washington State  
University  
President of  
WPC’s WSU YP  
Club

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



# Viewpoint

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

Dear Friends,

With the New Year and the 2017 legislative session well underway, the board and staff of Washington Policy Center are appreciative of your generous support that continues to make our efforts and impact possible.

A few key Washington Policy Center recommendations have been implemented already this year – victories for freedom and liberty: Pullman School District followed in Lincoln County’s footsteps and became the first school district to adopt collective bargaining transparency; the WEA union opposition to charter schools was shot down by a superior court judge in King County keeping charter schools open for children; and the state Senate adopted a rule which requires a 2/3 vote for final passage of tax bills during the legislative session.

We’re confident that with our new strategic plan and your support, we’ll see even more policy victories that represent WPC’s recommendations to advance freedom and liberty in our state.

In this issue of *Viewpoint*, our center directors cover the top issues for 2017 including: the need for water markets in our state, the latest trends in spending and learning, the power of patient-centered health care reform, how we can protect the environment by using technology, the importance of keeping Washington income tax free, the need to give teens an opportunity to gain work experience and skills by expanding the teen training wage, and how to reduce traffic congestion.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Viewpoint* and find the news and analysis valuable and informative. As always, we invite you to share it with your family, friends, and colleagues. The magazine can also be viewed and shared from our website, [washingtonpolicy.org](http://washingtonpolicy.org).

We appreciate your support of WPC; together, we can continue to make a positive impact in our state.

I hope to see you at our annual Solutions Summit events in Bellevue and Spokane in May!



Dann Mead Smith  
President



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Roberta Weymouth  
Wayne Williams  
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# A SNAPSHOT OF 2016

## Publications & Media

- 14 Legislative Memos
- 17 Policy Briefs
- 18 Legislative Testimonies
- 22 Policy Notes
- 29 Op - Eds
- 302 Blogs
- 1,545 Media Hits

### Featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Forbes



The Seattle Times

## Major Activities

- WPC's new Initiative on Agriculture is bringing the voice of families and farmers in Washington's small cities and rural communities to the state's Seattle-dominated policy discussions.
- WPC has consistently spoken out against Political Correctness, in defense of free speech, and the freedom to discuss policy ideas in public.
- Our Young Professionals group continues to grow. In 2016, we hired a full-time YP Coordinator to maintain existing activities and to expand the program to its full potential. We also added a fourth campus club to our program at Gonzaga University!

## Policy Victories

- WPC's research and a citizens' guide publication helped defeat a local income tax ballot proposal in Olympia. WPC will continue to oppose a state income tax.
- WPC's research and a citizens' guide publication helped defeat a state law that would have given public tax money to private political campaigns.
- WPC's work with the media helped expose the governor's secret talks with union executives to increase state spending, and WPC helped Lincoln County adopt collective bargaining transparency - a first in our state.
- Washington's charter schools faced significant opposition when, in response to a union inspired lawsuit, our State Supreme Court ruled that charter schools should close. We acted to ensure our legislature corrected this unjust ruling. Our Center for Education amplified the voices of parents to save their schools. The legislature responded by passing SB 6194, to fully fund our state's charter schools.



## Social Highlights

- 40% increase in Facebook followers
- 38% increase in LinkedIn connections

washingtonpolicy.org: 270,401 visitors  
washingtonvotes.org: 111,093 visitors

## Online Visitors

# LIBERTY PARTNERS

Our Liberty Partners represent a special, dedicated group of our donors who have made a monthly commitment to WPC and our mission.

## Why give Monthly?



**It's Easy** – Choose your gift amount when you sign up – change or cancel at any time.



**It's Efficient** – As a Liberty Partner, we respect your pledge and will not ask you for additional donations throughout the year.



**It's Effective** – Your monthly commitment is a great way to make a meaningful difference and know your support is helping to further our mission of improving lives through market solutions.

As a Liberty Partner, you receive membership benefits including all of our research publication mailings, our quarterly *Viewpoint* magazine, invitations to all of our events at a discounted member rate, and free admission to our annual Solutions Summit (special benefit just for Liberty Partners).

Joining is easy! Just check the box on our provided, postage-paid giving envelopes or visit our website at [www.washingtonpolicy.org/donate](http://www.washingtonpolicy.org/donate) and click “Make this a recurring gift.” One donation a month adds up to real impact. Join our Liberty Partners to give easily and often with a monthly donation today!

As always, your gift to WPC is 100% tax-deductible. Please contact our Development Director, Sydney Jansen at (206) 937-9691 or [sjansen@washingtonpolicy.org](mailto:sjansen@washingtonpolicy.org) to join our Liberty Partners today!



# THERE'S A LEAK IN THE WATER SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON



BY MADILYNNE CLARK, *Director, WPC Initiative on Agriculture*



**W**ater, water, everywhere and not a drop to spare – at least not in Washington state. A Washington State Supreme Court ruling from October 2016, in *Whatcom County v. Western Washington*

*Growth Management Hearings Board (Hirst)*, created a situation in which there is literally not a drop to spare for rural homeowners. Permit-exempt wells, which use a negligible amount of the state's water resources, are no longer permissible unless applicants prove there is no impairment to the water source.

The court, favoring anti-growth interest groups, ruled that less than one percent of Washington's water use is enough to justify millions of dollars in impairment studies, halting economic growth, disproportionate property taxes, and real hardship for many Washington families.

Facing incredible pressure from rural residents who are bearing the burden of this ruling, legislators are attempting to fix this intrusion into public policy by the court. The court's ruling changed the meaning of language in the Growth Management Law and contradicted the state's water laws. So where do legislators go from here?

Some special interest groups continue to oppose all action during legislative committee hearings. This is simply unfair, and puts all the costs for water issues on residents displaced or burdened by the ruling.

Despite that, or because of it, multiple bills in the 2017 legislative session address the *Hirst* decision. The most promising bill in the Senate received bipartisan support and clarifies that Washington state's water law still allows the Department of Ecology to declare water available for permit-exempt wells. This would restore access to water for Washington's rural residents.

That, however, doesn't solve the whole problem. Legislators have proposed several bills which address multiple facets of the state's water law. The overwhelming message is that the system is broken.

What type of system demands sufficient water for salmon and fish runs, yet discourages agricultural conservation? What type of system encourages water banking and markets, yet creates court rulings which make those opportunities an impossibility? Washington state's system.

*“Less than one percent of Washington's water use is enough to justify millions of dollars in impairment studies, halting economic growth, disproportionate property taxes, and real hardship for many Washington families.”*

Contradictions exist in abundance. We need to fix the *Hirst* decision and encourage water conservation, but they are temporary bandages. Washington's water policy needs to move to a functional, practical system that behaves like a market.

Global examples, like Israel, show that prices can encourage both conservation and effective use of water to a degree currently unattainable by Washington state. For example, technology which measures each drop of water records the fluctuation of moisture within a tree, and recirculates water to get its full use is common in that part of the world. Our state can have that type of system if we move to a market-like model.

Water markets are a possible solution for Washington's water dilemma. Water users who conserve water can transfer the excess to more valuable uses, naturally encouraging conservation, while providing access to water for more parties. Washington needs to address the immediate needs of *Hirst* to remove the undue burden on many families, but in the long-run a complete fix of our water system should involve water markets.

# TRENDS IN SPENDING AND LEARNING IN WASHINGTON'S SCHOOLS, 2006-2016

 BY LIV FINNE, *Director, Center for Education*



In the ongoing debate over education spending in our state, some special interest groups continue to argue that schools are underfunded. These special interests never define the dollar amount they think the people of Washington should spend on schools. No matter how much the people of Washington provide for public schools, according to these political activists, it is never enough.

Political demands for more money also regularly omit mention of the current state budget, which now supplies \$18.2 billion to K-12 schools, the highest amount in state history. These demands belittle historic spending increases enacted by state lawmakers of both parties, particularly the \$4.6 billion increase in state spending supplied by taxpayers in the last four years, a 34 percent permanent expansion to the state program of basic education.

Average school funding from all local, state, and federal sources has grown from \$8,836 per student in 2006 to an all-time high of \$12,652 per student in 2016, more than the tuition charged by many private schools.

One commonly-held assumption is that more school spending will inevitably lead to better learning outcomes for students. Recent experience, however, shows that this has not been the case.

Ten years of data show that more spending has not led to better learning outcomes for students.

Scores of fourth and eighth grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and math have not shown improvement, remaining unchanged between 2007 and 2015.

School bureaucracies, with guaranteed employment and funding, have little or no incentive to increase the time or quality of instruction provided in public school classrooms. Over time the school system is costing the public more money and providing less benefit, consistent with the results economists say are to be expected from monopoly systems.

The primary obstacle to reform within the education system is the political influence of executives at the WEA union. The main shortcoming preventing parents from gaining better learning opportunities for children is Washington's lack of family choice in education. In contrast, officials in 30 states and the District of Columbia now offer parents a total of 52 school choice programs to help students and families get access to better schools.

These family choice programs create powerful incentives for school administrators to improve the quality of the programs they run, knowing that their own public funding is no longer guaranteed. Lawmakers in these states have expanded access to charter schools. They have also offered families Education Savings Accounts and created vouchers and tax credit scholarships for private schools. Over 300,000 students now benefit from these family-based education programs.

Parents want access to school choice programs for their children. These programs are the best way to help individual children get a better education. These programs also provide incentive for monopoly school systems to improve.

Washington state's experience shows that large increases in spending in an unreformed district-based education system has not resulted in better learning outcomes for students. The experience of other states indicates that Washington's children would benefit from greater access to educational choice.





# THE NEED TO PUT THE PATIENT FIRST

 BY ROGER STARK, MD, FACS, *Policy Analyst, Center for Health Care*



**REPLACING OBAMACARE**

The latest from a WPC study, HEALTH CARE REFORM AFTER THE ELECTION: WHAT CONGRESS SHOULD DO TO REPLACE OBAMACARE, by Policy Analyst Dr. Roger Stark

- 1 CHANGE IS NEEDED**  
The November election indicated that voters want a new direction for the country, including a new direction for our health care system.
- 2 BENCHMARKS WERE MISSED**  
The Affordable Care Act has helped some people, but it has not come close to reaching the two goals supporters of "Health Care for All" promised: coverage for everyone and decreasing health care costs.
- 3 PATIENT CONTROLLED PRINCIPLES**  
Congressional Republicans have published a paper that outlines six health care reform principles with the goal of more patient-control and less government intervention. The proposed reform principles are:
  - Repeal Obamacare
  - Provide all Americans with more choices, lower costs, and greater flexibility
  - Protect and strengthen coverage options for all Americans
  - Enact Medicaid entitlement reform
  - Spur innovation in health care
  - Protect and preserve Medicare
- 4 PROTECT ALL AMERICANS**  
Policymakers must find a way to not only repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, but also to protect those people who have benefited from the law.
- 5 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**  
Repeal and replace should occur simultaneously so patients, providers, and insurance companies can plan for the future without uncertainty.
- 6 PUTTING THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE**  
After the November election, policymakers should understand the mood of Americans and should work together to achieve meaningful reform that puts patients, rather than the government, in charge of their health care.

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Republicans won nationally in the recent November election. From a policy standpoint, American voters want a new direction for the country, including a new direction for our health care system.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, passed in 2010 and was enacted as a highly partisan, complex, 2,700 page federal law. The Obama Administration, Congress, and the U.S. Supreme Court have made over 70 major changes in Obamacare in an effort to make it more acceptable. Yet a majority of Americans has opposed the entire law or significant parts of it since it passed.

Unquestionably, the ACA has helped some people, but it has not come close to reaching the two goals supporters promised: coverage for everyone and reduced health care costs.

The problem that Republicans now face is making a seamless and painless transition from Obamacare to a patient-oriented system. Although the ACA is a failed law, 20 million Americans now have health insurance either with taxpayer subsidies on the exchanges or through the expanded Medicaid entitlement program.

*“What happened to “If you like your health care, you can keep it.”?”*

Policymakers must find a way to not only repeal and replace Obamacare, but also to protect those people who have benefited from the law, so they can continue to have health coverage. Republicans did not win a 60-vote majority in the United States Senate. Consequently, repeal of the ACA will require either the support of Democratic lawmakers to reach a filibuster-proof 60 votes, or a series of votes on specific parts of the law requiring only a simple majority.

Through a process known as reconciliation, a simple majority in the Senate can amend the parts of the law that specifically deal with the budget and financing. The reconciliation process could defund the Medicaid expansion





## “Obamacare forced 290,000 Washington residents out of their existing health insurance and into government-approved plans.”

and could stop the subsidies in the Obamacare exchanges. Because the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the penalty for not having health insurance is a tax, theoretically the reconciliation process could repeal the individual and employer mandates.

The process could not be used, however, to repeal the insurance mandates in Obamacare. This non-budget policy change would require 60 votes in the Senate to pass. Republicans must offer reasonable alternatives to people who might lose their health insurance if Obamacare is repealed. This will be difficult to accomplish unless the costly mandates imposed by the law are repealed.

To eliminate uncertainty, policymakers should pass a replacement plan simultaneously with a repeal of Obamacare. Congress is now considering a Republican bill that eliminates the individual and employer mandates, reforms Medicaid, expands the use of health savings accounts and catastrophic health insurance, enacts individual tax credits, and repeals all the Obamacare taxes.

For six years government officials have pursued an aggressive policy of centralized control over people’s health care, with the result that Obamacare remains unworkable and unpopular. After the November election, however, policymakers should understand the American sentiment and should work together to achieve meaningful reform that puts patients, rather than the government, in charge of their health care.

*\* To see the infographics in detail, visit [washingtonpolicy.org](http://washingtonpolicy.org)*

WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

### WHO USES HEALTH CARE?

*An in-depth look into health care users and those incurring the cost*

The full study can be found at [www.washingtonpolicy.org](http://www.washingtonpolicy.org)

Meaningful health care reform should not only address the insurance issue, but should also consider who uses health care and at what cost.

The people who actually use health care and have expenditures are not the same individuals year after year.

---

**THE FACTS**

<b>85%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<small>85% of the US population used health care in 2014.</small>	<small>In 2014, the top 1% of health care users accounted for 23% of total expenditures, at an average individual cost of \$107,000.</small>	<small>The bottom 50% of users accounted for 3% of expenditures, at an average individual cost of \$264.</small>

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**HEALTH CARE REFORM SHOULD...**

Strive for health insurance that offers accessible, low-cost, broad-coverage plans that would get as many people as possible into the risk pool.

Dr. Roger Black's latest study examines who is paying for health care and who needs it most. Read the full study at [washingtonpolicy.org](http://washingtonpolicy.org)

# HOW VOLUNTARY ACTION AND THE FREE MARKET HELP PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

 BY TODD MYERS, *Director, Center for the Environment*



Forty-five years ago, President Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency to address the environmental problems of the day. Those problems were easy to see. Big smokestacks and large outfalls into the water were the main source of environmental impact, and addressing them was fairly straightforward.

*“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the old model obsolete.”*

*- Buckminster Fuller*

Decades later, regulations and bureaucracy have, ironically, become an impediment to environmental protection.

Having inherited the family ranch in Montana, rancher Jeff Laszlo decided he would return a portion of the grazing land to a wetland. He hoped it would provide habitat for fish and birds. He did, however, have a rule: nobody from a federal agency could come on his land. He understood the minute federal bureaucrats stepped on his land, they would create barriers and make the project difficult or impossible.

Today, the land is a beautiful wetland with birds and other animals enjoying the area. He even found that his remaining grazing land was more productive.

When he decided to take the next step and return grayling, a fish that had been extirpated in the area, to the river, he stuck by the rule of doing it his way. That didn't entirely protect him. When the federal government considered listing the grayling as a threatened species, he knew that reintroducing the fish would subject his land, and that of his neighbors downstream, to strict federal regulations.

Laszlo embodies a growing trend toward permissionless innovation, where property rights and information technology combine to create solutions that avoid the waste of government bureaucracy and regulation.

There are many others using technology to create new environmental solutions.

In Seattle, Car2Go created a network of cars that can be rented for local trips. Despite initial regulatory obstacles, the program has become so popular, it is expanding. Seattle now touts it as an environmental success, saying it has significantly reduced the number of cars in the city.

Farmers now use drones to target application of pesticides and fertilizer, using only as much as is necessary. This reduces resource use and environmental impact. Ironically, farmers still face regulation limiting how they can use drones.

Several new information technologies are finding ways to even out electricity demand, reducing big and costly peaks. A company called Tendril created a software system for utilities to orchestrate energy use in residences to reduce total use. For example, the system can cool a house early in the day before the heat sets in and the home will remain close to that temperature during the day. By cooling early, it avoids peak demand that will occur later.

Buckminster Fuller once said, “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the old model obsolete.” While many anticipate the Trump Administration will fight the existing reality, reining in excessive EPA regulation, there are many across the country who are taking Fuller's words to heart and building a new model. That is good news, not only for the economy and personal freedom, but for the environment.



# LET'S MAKE WASHINGTON'S INCOME TAX BAN COURT PROOF



BY JASON MERCIER, *Director, Center for Government Reform*



This session lawmakers considered sending voters a constitutional amendment to take the threat of an income tax out of the hands of our state supreme court. Unfortunately, neither the House (HJR 4207) nor Senate (SJR 8204) proposal was approved. Recent income tax rumors in Seattle, however, continue to provide urgency for the legislature to act on this protection in the future.

Washington is one of nine states that currently do not impose a personal income tax. The importance of this policy to our state can be found on the state Department of Commerce's "Choose Washington" website that is used to promote the state to businesses. Commerce officials boast, "We offer businesses some competitive advantages found in few other states. This includes no personal or corporate income tax."

Under a 1933 state Supreme Court ruling, imposing a graduated income tax in Washington would require a constitutional amendment. In recent years, however, supporters of imposing an income tax have been seeking to find a test case in the belief that today's state supreme court would overturn established case law and allow a graduated

Washington state voters have rejected an income tax nine times (in 1934, 1936, 1938, 1942, 1944, 1973, 1975, 1982, and 2010). Interestingly, proponents of three of those rejected income tax proposals even said money from the tax would be dedicated to education spending (in 1973, 1975, and 2010).

***"Washington state voters have rejected an income tax nine times."***

A local income tax proposal in Olympia was just rejected in November 2016, the first time in two decades that a tax increase has failed in the city. What made the Olympia income tax proposal noteworthy was the explicit acknowledgement by its supporters that their real goal was to create a test case to see if today's state supreme court would rule to repeal Washington's graduated income tax ban. Similar concerns relate to recent proposals for a capital gains income tax (none of the states without an income tax impose a tax on capital gains income). There are also new threats in Seattle to adopt a city only income tax to set up a legal test case.


HJR 4207 and SJR 8204 were designed to take the policy question of whether Washington should impose an income tax out of the court's hands. This is exactly what happened recently in Tennessee. In Tennessee, lawmakers wanted to make sure citizens and businesses could have the peace of mind that imposition of a state income tax was not just one legislative session away. They asked and 66% of voters approved a constitutional amendment banning income taxes.

Although the Washington income tax ban proposals failed to advance this year, hopefully a future legislature will act to send one to the voters so the people can make our state's ban on an income tax crystal clear and guard it from being overturned by a future surprise court ruling that ignores well-established legal precedents. Judging from nine past elections, Washingtonians clearly oppose a state income tax, and they should be provided the opportunity to act on a ban.

income tax without a constitutional amendment. Bills this year, HJR 4207 and SJR 8204, would have taken this tax policy decision out of the hands of five justices and made it crystal clear that our state constitution does not allow a personal income tax.



# GIVE TEENS A LEG UP - EXPAND THE TRAINING WAGE

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



Last fall, voters passed Initiative 1433, increasing the state's minimum wage and mandating paid sick leave for every worker. The new law went into effect on January 1, with the minimum wage jumping to \$11.00 per hour; by 2020 every employer will have to pay every worker a minimum of \$13.50 per hour.

That may seem like great news for the state's minimum wage earners. What isn't great is the harm the new law will do to the young, inexperienced, and unskilled workers who typically rely on entry-level jobs that pay minimum wage.

Hiring a 16-year-old who has no work history or skills is a gamble for an employer. When the minimum wage is low, it is a risk many employers are happy to take. The lower wage justifies the extra work employers must put in to teach that 16-year old how to be a productive employee.

When the minimum wage is too high, such on-the-job training becomes too expensive for employers. Many business owners quit hiring young workers, favoring applicants with more experience and proven skills instead.

This is not just my opinion. The overwhelming majority of economic studies on minimum wages over the past two decades show a high minimum wage has the greatest negative impact on people with low-skills, such as teen workers just entering the workforce.

The University of Washington researcher studying Seattle's \$15 minimum wage law explains: "...If they [employers] are going to be paying as much as they have

to pay they are not taking a chance on a teenager, they are looking for a more experienced worker to fill that job."

High youth unemployment is not simply a matter of young workers going without a summer job. There are significant long-term effects of youth unemployment—a "wage scar" that does lasting harm to a worker's job prospects and future earnings. The longer a young person remains unemployed, the greater the long-term scarring effect.



Avery Schaffer can't find work due to the high minimum wage and business owners being incentivized to hire older employees with prior experience. For more information, watch our video featuring Avery at [www.washingtonpolicy.org](http://www.washingtonpolicy.org)

A starter wage that is lower than the minimum helps counteract the job-killing impact on youth employment.

This is precisely why state law allows employers to pay 14-15 year-old workers 85% of the minimum wage. State officials understand few employers will hire a 14 or 15-year old with no skills or experience and pay them a high minimum wage. But this same reluctance extends to hiring 16 and 17 year-old

workers with no skills or experience.

The state Department of Labor and Industries has the authority to, and should, expand the benefits of a training wage to all workers under 18. Failing this, lawmakers should pass legislation to the same effect. Initiative 1433 does not mandate a minimum wage for workers under the age of 18, so passage of a teen training wage would not run afoul of the two-year moratorium on amending voter-passed initiatives.

A training wage for teen workers would provide employers with a much-needed incentive to take a chance on hiring young, unskilled, and inexperienced job seekers. Such a policy would reduce the harm that the state's new minimum wage will have on job opportunities now, and in the future, for our state's young people.



# WSDOT'S PLAN IS DESIGNED TO MAKE TRAFFIC CONGESTION WORSE

 BY MARIYA FROST, Director, Coles Center for Transportation



Washington State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT) officials have six broad transportation policy goals: safety, preservation, mobility (congestion relief), environment, stewardship, and economic vitality.

Congestion relief is one of WSDOT's core responsibilities. Yet under the goal of mobility, WSDOT reports that annual delays "reached 7.7 million hours in 2015, increasing 91.2 percent from 4.0 million hours in 2011."

Interestingly, the report states that "860 million vehicle miles were avoided in 2014 due to public transit," which WSDOT measures as a success.

A few important details can be garnered from this data.

First, traffic congestion is significantly worse.

Second, contrary to what public officials often insinuate, public transportation and traffic congestion are entirely unrelated. However, the report states that 860 million vehicle miles a year would have been driven on highways were it not for transit. This is not a valid correlation.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) offers a little more perspective, as the September 2016 traffic volume trends report shows that for the month of September alone, Washingtonians drove 5.7 billion miles. That is roughly 68.4 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) annually, compared to the supposed 860 million miles avoided due to transit. In



*"It would take nearly three months for transit to mitigate even one day of actual reported vehicle mileage tax."*

other words, all of transit across Washington state only "mitigated" 1.2 percent of actual VMT. Meanwhile, actual VMT increased by 4.8 percent in September of 2016 from September of 2015.

What does this mean? Let's say, based on the FHWA data, people drive about 263 million miles per weekday. Transit supposedly saved 860 million vehicle miles last year, or 3.3 million miles per weekday. It would take nearly three months for transit to mitigate even one day of actual reported VMT.

More concerning is the fact that reducing vehicle miles through the use of public transportation is even a goal, when public transportation does not serve the purpose of reducing traffic congestion.

It seems that if people chose to work from home to "avoid" adding to the VMT total, this would be irrelevant as the reduction matters only if they take transit instead. This suggests that reducing VMT is not WSDOT's goal nearly as much as increasing transit use.

It would be good policy for WSDOT to not only have congestion reduction as a goal (which was a recommendation WPC strongly supported), but to next reinstate the performance metrics outlined in Governor Locke's 2000 Blue Ribbon Commission, such as having traffic congestion and delay per driver be reduced and no worse than the national mean. Not having a metric in place enables the agency to keep failing to meet their abstract goal of "delay reduction," while routinely noting successes in "avoided annual VMT" through transit.

This matters because traffic congestion relief is a priority for the public and an enormous cost to the state economy - and thus should be a top priority for public officials.

## Sound Policy WPC's Podcast

# Young Professionals



Our YP and Communications teams have worked together to launch WPC's first-ever podcast!

Sound Policy is a weekly podcast of news and analysis from a free-market perspective. Our guests will include policy experts, business leaders, and members of our community who can speak authoritatively on some of the most important issues facing our state. Since podcasts are overwhelmingly listened to by young people, we are excited to launch this new way of spreading WPC's voice in policy issues to a new generation of Washingtonians.

Find us on iTunes, Google Play, and our website under the YP tab!

## YP Mentor Program

*Coming later this year*

**Find a Mentor:** If you are a WPC College Club or YP member, we will match you with a mentor from WPC's vast network of professionals. Whether you are looking to grow your knowledge, explore a new industry, or gain wisdom from those who have been at it longer than you, this program is for you!

**Become a Mentor:** Help us invest in the next generation of free-market policy leaders by becoming a mentor! Whether you are two years out of college or two years from retirement, there is someone who can learn from you.

Email [mentorship@washingtonpolicy.org](mailto:mentorship@washingtonpolicy.org) with questions or to sign up to be a mentor.

## Internships with WPC

As part of WPC's Doug and Janet True Research Internship Program, WPC has two, paid internship positions every quarter for approximately 12 hours per week. Interns work with all departments including research, development, communications, and events creating a well-rounded learning experience.

For more information visit: <http://www.washingtonpolicy.org/about/employment>.

# Washington Policy Center

# Spring 2017

## April

- 4** - Legislative Lunchbox Series: Tri-Cities
- 11** - Legislative Lunchbox Series: Spokane
- 20** - Eastside Breakfast: Bellevue  
with Congresswoman Suzan DelBene
- 25** - YP in Tri-Cities Speed Networking
- 27** - Seattle Breakfast: Health Care

April 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30						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

## May

- 4** - YP @ SU Debate:  
Health Care Reform in Washington state
- 15** - Western Washington Solutions Summit
- 16** - Eastern Washington Solutions Summit
- 17** - YP @ UW Life and Leadership Panel  
with Howard Behar, Mike Neighbors, John Connors, and Rob McKenna
- 25** - YP Seattle College Seniors Happy Hour
- 25** - Seattle Breakfast: Small Business & Labor Reform

May 2017						
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			

## June

- 9** - Pierce County Small Business Forum
- 15** - Eastside Breakfast: Bellevue  
with Hon. Bruce Dammeier, Pierce County Executive
- 20** - YP in Tri-Cities Happy Hour
- 22** - Seattle Breakfast: Environment

June 2017						
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	

For a full Calendar, go to [Washingtonpolicy.org/events](http://Washingtonpolicy.org/events)

**GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!**



**SOLUTIONSSUMMIT**<sup>2017</sup>  
WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER'S STATEWIDE POLICY CONFERENCE

**Western Washington**

Monday, May 15, 2017  
11:00 am - 6:00 pm  
Hyatt Regency  
Bellevue

**Eastern Washington**

Tuesday, May 16, 2017  
11:00 am - 6:00 pm  
Historic Davenport Hotel  
Spokane

**Register today at [washingtonpolicy.org/events](http://www.washingtonpolicy.org/events)**