



WASHINGTON
ROUNDTABLE

2011 policy agenda

Although the Great Recession is technically over, Washington continues to wrestle with its impacts. Burdened by an enduring structural deficit, lawmakers must once again contend with a multibillion-dollar budget shortfall projected for the coming biennium. This problem cannot be solved with the short-term tools used in the past—federal help, fund shifts, tax increases, temporary spending reductions and payment deferrals. Rather, it demands a fundamental rethinking of what government does and how it does it.

State leaders have taken up this cause and are evaluating many options for balancing the 2011-13 budget—from renegotiating labor contracts to changing how agencies are organized and services are delivered. The decisions needed in the near term will not be easy. Consequential program reductions will be necessary. Throughout this process, Washington must maintain a long-term focus, making continued progress in key areas—namely, education and infrastructure—that drive recovery, growth and quality of life. The state must encourage job creation by reducing the cost burden on employers and enacting reforms that will make Washington a more competitive place to do business.

Washington has the tools needed to meet this challenge. If state government is realigned to focus on delivery of priority services and creation of a more attractive business climate, then Washington will not only recover but thrive as a desirable place to invest, create jobs, build community and raise families.

LAY A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC SPENDING AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Now is the time to confront our state's fiscal challenges head on, taking aggressive steps to address the enduring structural deficit and prioritizing policies and services that will lead to recovery and long-term growth.

ACTION NEEDED IN 2011:

- **Put Washington on a trajectory for long-term budget sustainability.**

The 2011 Legislature must enact a current revenue 2011-13 biennial budget that funds priority services with specific attention to those services—namely, education and infrastructure—that will drive economic recovery and growth. Unfunded liabilities must be addressed and transparency must be improved.

Throughout this process, lawmakers must keep an eye to the future and reduce the long-term cost curve.

- **Improve state competitiveness by reducing business costs.**

Washington is consistently ranked as one of the most expensive states in which to do business. To encourage job creation, policymakers must enact meaningful workers' compensation reforms and take the steps necessary to reduce other business costs.

MAINTAIN PROGRESS TOWARD A RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

Washington policymakers made much-needed investments in statewide transportation infrastructure in 2003 and 2005, resulting in hundreds of transportation improvements. Nonetheless, a backlog of unfunded and under-funded needs remains. The money from the 2003 and 2005 investments is nearly depleted.

ACTION NEEDED IN 2011:

- **Put the structures in place to secure new, long-term investment in statewide transportation.**
This includes development of a prioritized project list, funding sources (including tolling), clear performance measures and regional governance structures that will allow the central Puget Sound region and other urban areas with disproportionate needs to plan, prioritize and fund projects.
- **Ensure continued progress on high-impact projects.**
Washington has made steady progress toward improvements on corridors vital to commerce and mobility. The state must continue to advance work on projects such as the SR 520 Bridge Replacement & HOV Project, Alaskan Way Viaduct, Columbia Crossing and North-South Freeway.

REBUILD WASHINGTON WITH A REVITALIZED COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Despite significant fiscal challenges, this is a time of opportunity for education reform in Washington state. With a commitment at the federal level to incentivize key reforms, Washington has the potential to make significant progress in 2011. The state's goal must be to ensure every public school student graduates from high school prepared for the rigors of college and the workplace.

ACTION NEEDED IN 2011:

- **Provide stable funding for strong post-secondary institutions.**
Higher education is a major driver of economic growth, yet its budget is often hardest hit during times of state fiscal stress. The state must avoid disproportionately large cuts to higher-education funding in the 2011-13 budget, develop a more stable long-term framework for funding higher education and provide institutions with increased tuition-setting authority and operating flexibility, accompanied by clear accountability for results.
- **Adopt college- and work-ready standards and graduation requirements.**
Washington must adopt and begin to implement the State Board of Education's 24-credit high school graduation requirements as well as the Common Core Standards and aligned assessments. These are internationally benchmarked requirements and standards pegged to the skills and knowledge students need to succeed.
- **Adopt policies that promote effective teaching and drive student performance.**
The single most important factor influencing student achievement is teacher effectiveness. The second is school leadership. To ensure every Washington student is taught by an effective teacher, and attends a school led by an effective principal, the state must implement an educator evaluation system that incorporates multiple measures of student growth and will be used to determine school staffing decisions.

MAKING WASHINGTON A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE AND DO BUSINESS.

The Washington Roundtable is a nonprofit, public policy organization comprised of chief executives representing major private sector employers throughout Washington state. Since 1983, the Roundtable's CEO members have worked to create positive change on critical policy issues that foster economic growth, generate jobs and improve quality of life for Washingtonians.