

CHAIR'S REPORT



The Washington State Legislature entered 2017 with one overriding goal: To address the remaining pieces of the Washington Supreme Court's McCleary decision regarding basic education funding.

Lawmakers worked overtime—through four legislative sessions—to deliver a compromise that adds \$8.3 billion in funding for K-12 education, limits the use of local levies for basic education, and directs more resources to struggling students and low-performing schools. When the McCleary solution is fully implemented in 2019-21, the state will have increased its biennial investment in K-12 education by \$13.2 billion in just four biennia, investing nearly twice as much as it did in 2011-13. Lawmakers also made important investments in early learning and higher education, all of which are vital to preparing Washington students for career and life opportunities in their home state and in the global economy.

There will be 740,000 job openings in Washington state in just the next few years. Those jobs should go to Washington students whenever possible. To that end, we encourage state lawmakers to continue taking decisive steps to better educate and prepare Washington students for opportunities that await. We urge continued work to ensure Washington's culture of opportunity extends statewide, with focused efforts to nurture economic development outside of the state's urban centers. It is also essential that Washington continues to invest in building and maintaining infrastructure that will support growth, commerce, and quality of life.

On behalf of the Roundtable board, I commend lawmakers for the progress made this year. We look forward to continued collaboration to make Washington a better place to live, work, and do business.



Sincerely,

Kimberly J. Harris
President & CEO, Puget Sound Energy
Chair, Washington Roundtable

EDUCATION: PRIORITIES & OUTCOMES

Address the Washington Supreme Court's McCleary decision in a manner that leads to student achievement gains, particularly in low-performing schools and among struggling students.

In delivering the final piece of the McCleary solution, state lawmakers have increased the state's biennial investment in K-12 education by \$13.2 billion since the 2011-13 biennium. K-12 spending comprises more than half of the state operating budget (increasing 10 percentage points from 2011-13 to 2019-21). Lawmakers directed significant new resources to the Learning Assistance Program, the primary source of state funding to accelerate learning for struggling students. They also bolstered teacher compensation and benefits, allowing for salary enhancements for STEM, English language instruction, and special education teachers; and consolidating health benefits for school employees under one statewide system.

Set clear goals and measure progress as part of a robust education accountability system.

A clear and reliable system for assessing school and student performance against rigorous education standards is fundamental to raising student achievement. With strong bipartisan support in both legislative chambers, lawmakers enacted legislation that maintains the state's assessment-based high school graduation requirements in English language arts and math and provides students with additional options for meeting those requirements. The legislation also requires schools to provide specific interventions and supports for students who struggle to meet the high school standards.

Maintain the state's commitment to higher education and increased postsecondary capacity with a focus on high-demand STEM degrees.

Most job openings in our state—particularly those that offer salaries at or above the state median and opportunity for advancement—will be filled by workers with postsecondary credentials or experience. For that reason, the Washington Roundtable has set a goal: 70 percent of Washington high school students will attain a postsecondary credential by age 26. Lawmakers took steps toward reaching that goal with investments to expand the State Need Grant and invest in Guided Pathways at the state's community and technical colleges. These investments will improve postsecondary access and help students better navigate an education-to-career path.

Support improvements in school readiness.

Lawmakers improved access to high-quality early learning opportunities. The 2017-19 budget funds 1,800 additional slots for low-income students in the state's Early Childhood Education Assistance Program and increases the reimbursement rate to attract and support high-quality early learning providers. Legislation enacted this year also makes it easier for local governments, school districts, businesses, and nonprofits to support preschool expansion.

ECONOMIC VITALITY: PRIORITIES & OUTCOMES

Support continued implementation of the Connecting Washington transportation package.

Lawmakers continued to make progress toward improving the state's transportation networks this year, appropriating \$1.3 billion for the 2017-19 biennium to support implementation of the 2015 Connecting Washington package. This investment includes funding for high-impact projects such as the Puget Sound Gateway (SR 167/SR 509), SR 520, I-5, and the US 395 North Spokane Corridor.

Encourage job growth and prosperity statewide.

Lawmakers took steps to protect and foster growth by delivering a McCleary funding solution that raises and distributes new revenue equitably across the state. Lawmakers also worked extensively with business and labor advocates to develop a state paid family and medical leave program that will extend benefits to Washington families in a manner that is fair to employees and employers. These negotiations were an encouraging example of bipartisanship and stakeholder collaboration.



The Washington Roundtable is a nonprofit organization comprised of senior executives of major private sector employers in Washington state. Founded in 1983, the Roundtable works to effect positive change on the public policy issues that are most important to supporting state economic vitality and fostering opportunity for Washingtonians. We are committed to making Washington a better place to live, work and do business.

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