



2016 POLICY AGENDA

Washington's economy is growing. Our anchor industries are strong and our state is enjoying solid employment growth. However, prosperity and opportunity are not spread evenly across Washington state. Some communities are getting left behind, and significant economic uncertainty remains. The Roundtable urges state policymakers to make progress in three areas in 2016 that will support economic growth and expand opportunity for more Washingtonians.

Support education policies that prepare all Washington students for great opportunities.

Address the Washington Supreme Court's McCleary rulings in a manner that leads to student achievement gains, maintains the state's commitment to career and college readiness, and supports economic health. In addressing the McCleary rulings, state lawmakers must ensure education investments lead to demonstrable gains in student achievement. The McCleary solution should be sustainable and support economic health. Lawmakers should tie resources to strategies that support increased teacher effectiveness, expanded STEM education, and career and college readiness for all students. They should maintain the state's commitment to rigorous and comprehensive education standards, aligned assessments, and accountability.

Support implementation of the state's Early Start Act and increase the percentage of students entering kindergarten prepared for success. Only 40 percent of Washington students entering kindergarten in 2014 were adequately prepared. All students deserve a great start. Policymakers should ensure the successful implementation of the 2015 Early Start Act and focus assistance on children most in need.

Support higher education investment and increased certificate and degree attainment at the state's postsecondary institutions. Lawmakers have moved our state in the right direction in recent years by increasing state investment in postsecondary education. This followed deep funding cuts in response to the great recession. Lawmakers should maintain the state's commitment to higher education and work to increase postsecondary certificate and degree attainment with a particular focus on high-demand STEM degrees.

Support the continued operation of public charter schools. Charter schools provide options and opportunities for students who have been historically underserved. Nearly two-thirds of students in Washington's existing public charter schools are from low-income families and almost 70 percent are students of color. Lawmakers should support current and future students by passing legislation allowing for the continued operation of public charter schools.



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Support an efficient, multimodal transportation system.

In 2015, state lawmakers passed a comprehensive transportation investment package that will yield benefits for decades to come. The state should maintain its commitment to the adopted package, with particular emphasis on maintenance and preservation and completion of projects in key economic corridors.

Encourage job growth and economic opportunity.

Washington is a leader in private sector job creation and a hub for entrepreneurship and innovation. Such advantages are tempered by cumbersome regulations and higher-than-average business costs. Lawmakers should provide a predictable, efficient and equitable regulatory and tax environment.

About Washington Roundtable.

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 affect 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.

www.waroundtable.com

Phone: 206-623-0180

Fax: 206-623-6576

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