



2019 POLICY AGENDA

Washington continues to benefit from one of the nation's most robust state economies, with strong projections for employment and personal income growth. However, a look beneath the statewide data indicates that prosperity is spread unevenly, and many families and communities in our state are struggling. Additionally, there is growing concern that substantial increases in state spending in recent years have not been matched with a commitment to build strong reserves. This will put recent investments in education and other state priorities at risk during the next economic downturn. We call on state policymakers to focus on preparing our young people for postsecondary education and career success; to drive an agenda for inclusive and diversified growth; and to ensure the state is building for – not borrowing from – its future.

Education

Most of the more than 740,000 jobs that will be available in Washington state in the coming years will be filled by workers with a post-high school credential, such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate. Yet, it is estimated that only 40 percent of our students attain a credential by age 26. Credential attainment for low-income students and students of color is even lower.

Our goal is to raise the credential attainment rate for Washington students to 70 percent by the high school class of 2030. Hitting this goal will greatly benefit our students – each of whom will earn an estimated \$1 million more on average over their lifetimes with a credential – and lead to reductions in poverty and unemployment while saving the state billions each year in social spending.

THE ROUNDTABLE URGES THE 2019 LEGISLATURE TO:

- Ensure Washington's youngest learners enter school ready to learn and excel, with a focus on expanding high-quality early learning options for low-income children.
- Ensure students are positioned to succeed on the post-high school pathway of their choice by maintaining the state's commitment to rigorous learning standards, assessments, and high school graduation requirements.
- Support students who may be at risk of dropping out by establishing an early warning system that monitors if 9th graders are on track to graduate on time.
- Drive improved student outcomes by requiring school districts to establish academic acceleration policies that enroll high school students into rigorous coursework.
- Increase the likelihood that students will pursue and attain post-high school credentials by expanding access to high-quality dual credit and dual-enrollment opportunities.
- Expand opportunities for students to pursue post-high school credentials in high-demand fields
- Support credential completion at the state's community and technical colleges through expansion of Guided Pathways programs.
- Reduce financial barriers to postsecondary education for Washington's lowest-income students by fully funding the State Need Grant.
- Require the Education Research and Data Center to report disaggregated postsecondary attainment for all high school cohorts. Use that data to improve systems and provide student supports.



2019 POLICY AGENDA *(continued)*

Economic Vitality

State revenue growth in Washington has outpaced that of the nation since 2015, with state revenues projected to be 17 percent (or \$7.5 billion) higher in the 2017-19 biennium than they were in the previous biennium. State spending has also risen dramatically, with spending in the 2019-21 biennium projected to be 55 percent higher than it was at the pre-recession peak in 2007-09. A pattern of dramatic spending growth without a commensurate commitment to strong reserves will put Washington in a precarious position when the economy slows. It is important that state leaders act to ensure fiscal stability, promote job creation, and foster growth statewide.

THE ROUNDTABLE URGES THE 2019 LEGISLATURE TO:

- Deliver a 2019-21 biennial budget that is sustainable, predictable, and supports diversified and inclusive economic growth. This includes maintaining the state's commitment to the four-year balanced budget requirement, building sufficient reserves to weather an economic downturn, and avoiding budget gimmicks or other actions that drain the state's rainy-day fund.
- Eliminate duplicative regulation and ease regulatory burdens, particularly in rural areas.
- Support policies that promote economic development and job growth, particularly in non-urban regions. This includes support for business attraction and retention efforts, incentives for greater inter-county and public-private cooperation, and expansion of broadband infrastructure to underserved communities.
- Promote transportation infrastructure asset preservation and maintenance, implement the 2015 Connecting Washington package as quickly and efficiently as possible, and begin planning for the next round of transportation investments in key economic corridors.

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 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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