



# WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE

## 2024 POLICY AGENDA

Washington state has demonstrated remarkable resilience in recent years despite profound national and global challenges. Thanks to the strength and diversity of our economic base, unemployment in Washington in 2023 was among its lowest levels in six decades. State revenue growth, while slowing, is projected to remain positive through the next two biennia. However, slowing global economic growth and geopolitical turbulence pose significant downside risks. We urge lawmakers to protect Washington's economic foundation in 2024. This includes a commitment to sustainable fiscal policy, infrastructure investments that support economic vitality and quality of life, and focused efforts to ensure

young people and adults—across all racial and ethnic communities—are positioned to complete the credentials needed to achieve their aspirations, support their families, and help our economy thrive.

### OUR PRIORITIES: STATE FISCAL POLICY

The size of the state operating budget doubled in the last decade. The 2023-25 biennial operating budget increases spending by 8.9% compared to the previous biennium. That's on top of a 24% increase in 2021-23 and a near 18% increase in 2019-21. Lawmakers should avoid unsustainable spending in 2024 and build on existing reserve accounts to enable Washington to navigate potential economic challenges successfully.

#### WE URGE LAWMAKERS TO:

- > Avoid added costs or regulatory burdens for employers as they navigate uncertain times.
- > Maintain and expand state fiscal reserves for use in an emergency or to mitigate impacts of economic softening or future downturn.
- > Limit spending growth that may prove unsustainable in the future.



## OUR PRIORITIES: EDUCATION & TALENT .....

Washington has added more than 500,000 jobs since the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic; another 500,000 are expected by 2030. Amid this growth, employers face an exceptionally tight labor market, with skills needs increasingly outpacing workforce capabilities. Looking across industry sectors, our economy requires far more skilled workers with industry licenses and certificates, apprenticeships, and degrees. Washington Roundtable and its education foundation, Partnership for Learning, remain committed to the goal that 70% of Washington students—overall and across all racial and ethnic communities—complete a post-high school credential by age 26. We also support upskilling and increased credential attainment among adults.

### WE URGE LAWMAKERS TO:

- > Protect high school graduation requirements that ensure students have the basic skills necessary to succeed in their next steps in life.
- > Support policies that reduce barriers for students to enroll in Washington's postsecondary institutions.
- > Expand career connected learning opportunities and the structures needed to support those opportunities.
- > Support targeted policies and investments that promote and increase upskilling and credential attainment among adult Washingtonians.
- > Ensure Workforce Education Investment Account expenditures drive progress toward the 70% credential attainment goal.

## OUR PRIORITIES: ECONOMIC CLIMATE & INFRASTRUCTURE .....

Washington is expected to surpass 8.5 million residents by 2030. Robust infrastructure investments, housing affordability, and sound climate policy are critical to supporting economic vitality and the well-being of all Washingtonians. A reliable and efficient transportation system is the linchpin of commerce, attracting businesses and nurturing job growth. Expanding affordable housing capacity is vital to quality of life and workforce stability. Thoughtful implementation of climate policy can drive sustainability, innovation, and opportunity. We must continue to make strides in each area to ensure Washington remains a great place to live, work, and do business.

### WE URGE LAWMAKERS TO:


- > Implement the Move Ahead Washington package as enacted, including projects in key economic corridors and a continued commitment to maintenance and preservation. Additionally, lawmakers should work to address systemic issues related to the state's ability to deliver projects and begin discussions about transportation revenue sustainability.
- > Provide additional support for and incentivize cities to implement Growth Management Act housing targets.
- > Incentivize affordable housing development accessible to people at the lowest income levels.
- > Catalyze market-rate housing development, particularly around major transit centers.
- > Use Climate Commitment Act funds to decarbonize the state's transportation system.
- > Encourage the development of clean energy sources and infrastructure to meet future energy demands and support a resilient grid.



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