



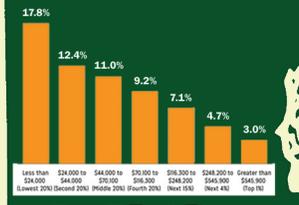
2021 WORKERS' RECOVERY AGENDA

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The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inequities and unfairness rooted deep in our economy. Workers and their families have been left behind — again — to wait in virtual unemployment lines or face the virus without adequate protections as essential workers. Vulnerable small businesses cannot reopen while families can't find child care. Meanwhile, some of the largest and most profitable companies have grown larger and more profitable, and able to contribute to our state's recovery.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, lawmakers must ensure that workers are protected, that families struggling with unemployment are supported, and that childcare resources are available to build our economy back stronger.

Taxes as a percentage of income



INVEST IN WASHINGTON

Our tax code is upside-down and backwards. Families who earn the least pay the most, while the wealthiest pay a fraction of their fair share. It doesn't have to be this way. The Legislature can balance our tax code, raise revenue, and refuse to cut programs that support families in crisis. Real investments are necessary if we are to grow our way out of this economic crisis without slashing higher education, workforce development, public safety, and the social safety net.

WORKER PROTECTION ACT

Washington has strong anti-discrimination, health and safety, and workplace protection laws, but they only work with an equally strong enforcement system.

Unfortunately, understaffed state agencies do not have the capacity to keep up with violations.

By empowering workers to enforce their rights on their own, without having to wait for government agencies that are stretched too thin, the Legislature will help secure worker safety, fair pay, and discrimination-free workplaces.



BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE

The Legislature can put thousands back to work through a significant investment in job-creating infrastructure. Our transportation system needs proper funding for maintenance and operations, plus major ferry and bridge construction projects. Investments in vehicle electrification infrastructure, mass transit, and culvert replacement, coupled with sensible carbon pricing mechanisms, will create good jobs and move our state toward a cleaner, more livable future.



ADDRESS CHILD CARE CRISIS

Pre-pandemic, Washington's child care system was already broken with 63% living in a "care desert," families burdened with excessive costs, and child care professionals earning less than dog walkers. The pandemic has only increased these inequities. The state must make bold, audacious investments in expanding subsidy access, increasing subsidy rates to meet the cost of care, and immediate financial relief so that these essential businesses will survive the pandemic and support our economic recovery.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Our unemployment insurance system should be updated to make it more flexible and attentive to workers' needs during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. A modest increase in the minimum benefit, and allowing for job search and waiting week waivers, and protections for vulnerable workers, will ensure it better serves the people of Washington.

REFORM POLICING

Charleena Lyles and Manuel Ellis were unjustly killed by police here in Washington state; two more names added to an unacceptably long list of Black people and people of color who have been victims of the overuse of force by law enforcement around the country. The Legislature must take action. The WSLC will support systemic reform efforts that address unnecessary use of force, and accountability for officers who violate the standards of their profession, while preserving core labor principles.

Here are some more priority issues on the Washington State Labor Council's 2021 Workers' Recovery Agenda:

- ❑ **BUY CLEAN / BUY FAIR** – Establish reporting requirements on the carbon content of structural materials, and the labor conditions at production facilities, purchased for public works.
- ❑ **CLEAN ENERGY SITING REFORM** – Streamline energy facility siting to provide more predictability without undermining environmental standards.
- ❑ **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR AAG TORT STAFF** – Remove the collective bargaining exemption for Assistant Attorneys General in the Torts unit so these workers can negotiate alongside their peers at the Attorney General's office.
- ❑ **HEAL ACT** – Define “environmental justice” in state law, make government accountable to and collaborative with frontline communities, and direct environmental investments to communities highly impacted by pollution.
- ❑ **HEALTH EMERGENCY LABOR STANDARDS** – Ensure that our laws have automatic triggers to protect workers during periods of pandemic, including improving sick leave access, L&I authority to adopt rules, infection reporting requirements, and the ability of workers to access and use effective PPE.
- ❑ **HEALTH SYSTEM TRANSPARENCY** – Improve health system data disclosure so we know better how healthcare dollars are spent, including hospitals' community benefit investments in Black and Brown communities.
- ❑ **PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE UPDATE**– Improve our PFML program by securing job protection for workers at smaller employers, including health insurance continuance, and lower the qualifying threshold to increase access. This will bring Washington's program in line with other states.
- ❑ **SHARED WORK & FURLOUGH PENSION PROTECTIONS** – Workers who are furloughed to help the state save money, and those engaged in Shared Work Programs, should not have their pensions harmed. The Legislature should honor their sacrifice by protecting their pensions.
- ❑ **SUPPORT IMMIGRANT WORKERS** – Fund a new program that provides immigrant workers with income support when Unemployment Insurance fails to do so.
- ❑ **WORKERS' COMP I.M.E. REFORM** – Follow up on the 2020 Legislature's Independent Medical Exam workgroup by implementing improvements for injured workers undergoing IMEs.

In addition to this Workers' Recovery Agenda, the WSLC will support other legislation championed by its affiliated unions and a range of issues to address economic opportunity and justice.



Union members comprise 18.8 percent of Washington's workforce, making it the third most unionized state in the nation,¹ and a national study ranked Washington #1 in its 2019 edition of its “States With the Strongest Unions.”² Widely considered to be the “voice of labor” in our state, the **Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO** (WSLC) is the state's largest labor organization, representing and providing services for hundreds of local unions throughout Washington. Currently, there are more than 600 local unions affiliated with the WSLC, representing some 550,000 rank-and-file union members.

One of the services the WSLC provides its affiliated unions is legislative education and advocacy. As with collective bargaining, WSLC unions join forces and speak with a united voice on public policy issues affecting working families.

Please contact the WSLC's officers and staff if you have questions about the council's positions on workers' issues:

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1. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state” (2019)

2. <https://www.thestand.org/2019/11/guess-which-state-has-the-strongest-unions/>