



# 2022 WORKERS' RECOVERY AGENDA

## Building Our Future

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As we adjust to the ongoing presence of COVID-19, the Washington State Legislature must prioritize policies that equip workers and families with tools to improve their lives. Legislators must invest in job creation and the human infrastructure necessary for workers to obtain those jobs. Legislators must address the crisis experienced by workers in our healthcare system by ensuring we retain, respect and reward them for the immense commitment they have made to the rest of us. And as we continue advancing and modernizing our energy systems, all levels of government in our state must examine the barriers to building out green energy infrastructure, including siting and permitting challenges. The Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO will be supporting aggressive approaches to strengthening our workforce systems, securing safe and healthy workplaces, and providing support and opportunities to working families in transition.



### RETAIN AND RESPECT OUR HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

Healthcare workers are in crisis after nearly two years on the front lines caring for people amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As emergency rooms and ICUs filled with sick people, our nurses, techs, medical assistants, CNAs, nutrition workers, and EVS workers showed up every day to meet people's needs despite short staffing and high burnout even prior to the pandemic. Long-term caregivers helped people get discharged from our overwhelmed hospitals, stay safe and recover at home. The Legislature must correct substandard compensation across the healthcare spectrum, and enforce minimum staffing standards so that workers can access basic meal and rest breaks that make work safe, reliable and balanced.

### SUPPORT AND EXPAND APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a proven pathway to the middle class for workers, and has served people in construction and skilled crafts in one form or another for hundreds of years. The Legislature should take steps to expand capacity and opportunity for current state-registered apprenticeship programs, while also providing resources for the successful adopting of joint labor-management programs in new industries. Further, the state should ensure that apprentices have access to a broad suite of student support services, and greater academic acknowledgement of their education and training.



### IMPROVE ENERGY FACILITY SITING AND PERMITTING

While Washington state is a leader in environmental and energy policy, its siting and permitting processes have hindered the construction of the infrastructure necessary to realize the transition to a green energy economy. The Legislature should modernize the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council to provide streamlined and predictable siting and permitting processes without harming environmental standards and the rights of Tribal nations.

### CREATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The Legislature should take proactive steps to create job opportunities in industries with good wages, supportive benefits, and strong labor protections, while meeting the infrastructure needs of Washington families and businesses. By passing a significant transportation investment package, supporting new decarbonized aluminum jobs, and extending job-supporting tax incentives for data centers and jobs in film, the Legislature can create middle-class opportunities to more families in all regions of our state.



Here are some more priority issues on the Washington State Labor Council's 2022 Workers' Recovery Agenda:

- ❑ **BUS DRIVER BENEFIT PARITY** — Ensure that contracted K12 bus drivers have quality health care.
- ❑ **BUY CLEAN, BUY FAIR** — State contractors should track the labor and environmental impact of materials.
- ❑ **REPETITIVE STRESS INJURIES** — Eliminate the prohibition on the state Dept. of Labor and Industries to issue rules to prevent repetitive stress injuries.
- ❑ **PENSION IMPROVEMENTS** — Provide benefit improvements for LEOFF and PSERS plans.
- ❑ **PAID FAMILY LEAVE ADJUSTMENTS** — Make technical fixes to improve PFMLI for people who apply for benefits.
- ❑ **PREVAILING WAGE FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES** — End ability-based discrimination in prevailing wage.
- ❑ **PUBLIC SERVICE STUDENT LOANS** — Add resources to efforts to reduce student debt for workers in public service.
- ❑ **RAIL WORKER SICK LEAVE** — Protect rail workers from retaliation when they need to use sick leave.
- ❑ **U.I. REPORTING ENFORCEMENT** — Put teeth in to our unemployment insurance wage and hour reporting laws to fight employer fraud.
- ❑ **U.I. VOLUNTARY QUILTS** — Support caregivers on UI who have limited availability to take jobs.
- ❑ **WACares IMPROVEMENTS** — Improve WACares, the new long-term services and supports program.
- ❑ **WORKERS' COMP I.M.E. RECORDING** — Allow injured workers to record their independent medical exams.

**OTHER WORK** — The WSLC and its affiliates will also work toward advancing several other issues in 2022, either through legislation or the budget. These include securing benefits similar to unemployment insurance for undocumented workers; allowing legislative staff to join together to form their own unions if they wish to do so; funding workforce development through apprenticeship and our college and university system; and securing funding for state employee, teacher, classified staff, and faculty mid-contract agreements and COLAs. We will also continue working with community partners to make housing more affordable and secure, to make health care more accessible, and to defend against attacks on workers' rights.

**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 17.4 percent of Washington's workforce, making it the fifth most unionized state in the nation,<sup>1</sup> and a recent national study ranked Washington #1 in its 2019 edition of its "States With the Strongest Unions."<sup>2</sup> Widely considered to be the "voice of labor" in our state, the **Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO** is the state's largest labor organization, representing and providing services for some 600 local unions with 500,000 rank-and-file 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" (2020)

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