

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 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 approve **SB 5751/HB 1868** to 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 for hundreds of years. The Legislature should approve **SB 5600** 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, lawmakers should pass **SB 5764** to 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. **HB 1812** would 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 that offer good wages, supportive benefits, and strong labor protections, while meeting Washington's infrastructure needs. Passing a **bold transportation investment package**, supporting new decarbonized aluminum jobs, and extending job-supporting tax incentives for data centers (**HB 1846**) and jobs in the film industry (**SB 5760 /HB 1914**).

RAISES FOR ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

The Legislature should invest in the workforce that has provided essential public services throughout the pandemic. It can do this by funding mid-contract MOUs for state employees, higher ed COLAs, and Corrections interest arbitration; correcting K-12 COLAs; and supporting behavioral health, child care, and home care workers.

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

- ❑ **BUS DRIVER BENEFIT PARITY** (SB 5326) – Ensure that contracted K12 bus drivers have quality health care.
- ❑ **BUY CLEAN, BUY FAIR** (HB 1103/SB 5366) – State contractors should track the labor and environmental impact of materials.
- ❑ **REPETITIVE STRESS INJURIES** (HB 1837) – Eliminate the prohibition on the Dept. of Labor and Industries from issuing rules preventing repetitive stress injuries.
- ❑ **PENSION IMPROVEMENTS** – Provide benefit improvements for LEOFF (HB 1701/SB 5652), PERS 1 (HB 1721/SB 5676), and PSERS (HB 1669/SB 5748) plans.
- ❑ **PAID FAMILY LEAVE ADJUSTMENTS** (SB 5649) – Make technical fixes to improve Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance for people who apply for benefits.
- ❑ **PREVAILING WAGE FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES** (SB 5763) – End ability-based discrimination in prevailing wage.
- ❑ **PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS** (SB 5847) – Expand awareness of, and increase access to, PSLF for public employees.
- ❑ **RAIL WORKER SICK LEAVE** (SB 5065) – Protect rail workers from retaliation when they need to use sick leave.
- ❑ **U.I. REPORTING ENFORCEMENT** (HB 1474) – Put teeth into our unemployment insurance wage-and-hour reporting laws to fight employer fraud.
- ❑ **U.I. VOLUNTARY QUILTS** (HB 1486/SB 5064) – Support caregivers on UI with limited availability to take jobs.
- ❑ **WACares IMPROVEMENTS** (HB 1732 & 1733) – Improve WACares, the new long-term services and supports program.
- ❑ **WORKERS' COMP I.M.E. RECORDING** (HB 1763/SB 5627) – 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 (SB 5438); allowing legislative staff to join together to form their own unions if they wish to do so (HB 1806/SB 5773); improving language access in schools (HB 1153); and funding workforce development through apprenticeship and our college and university system. 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 19 percent of Washington's workforce, making it the third most unionized state in the nation,¹ and a recent national study ranked Washington #1 in its rankings for "States With the Strongest Unions."² 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 550,000 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" (2021)
2. <https://www.thestand.org/2019/11/guess-which-state-has-the-strongest-unions/>