



2021 Legislative Agenda

As we enter the 2021 legislative session amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to see how the public health and economic crises have magnified existing and deeply rooted inequities across the state. The Budget & Policy Center calls on Washington state leaders to implement strategic and impactful policies that are equitable and inclusive and that prioritize resources for people with low incomes; Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); and others who are most impacted by this pandemic. Every budget and policy choice lawmakers make this session is an opportunity to reimagine and build a stronger, more just future for our state.

This session, lawmakers must:

- **Provide cash assistance directly to people most impacted by the crisis.** This includes expanding existing cash assistance programs and support to individuals by:
 - Enacting a **Recovery Rebate – an updated version of the Working Families Tax Credit** – to put cash back into the pockets of people with low incomes, including immigrant workers who are unjustly excluded from other federal tax benefits.
 - Reducing barriers to and reinvesting in **WorkFirst/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**.
 - Creating an **income support program for unemployed workers who are wrongly left out of unemployment insurance protections** – such as undocumented workers.
 - Deepening investments in and extending the availability of critical cash assistance programs such as **Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD), and the Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP)**.
- **Raise progressive revenue to invest equitably in communities.** Lawmakers can address the state’s economic crisis with new taxes on Washington’s wealthiest residents and large, profitable corporations. Options for doing so include (but are not limited to):
 - Enacting a state excise tax on **capital gains**, or profits from the sale of corporate stocks and bonds, and other high-end financial assets.
 - Enacting new excise or **payroll taxes on the salaries of CEOs and other highly paid corporate employees**.
 - Extending the **estate tax** to include untaxed, multi-million-dollar inheritances by re-enacting a **state inheritance tax**.
 - Applying **higher excise tax rates to real estate deals worth more than \$1.5 million**.

Our principles to guide the state policy response to the economic crisis

- Lead with equity.
- Provide immediate, impactful, and sustained relief.
- Make permanent fixes to underlying structural failures.
- Implement policy responses rooted in trust and dignity, not paternalism.
- Reject a scarcity mindset: There is enough wealth in our state to invest in our people.

[Read these principles in full.](#)

- **Bolster investments in public services that support well-being and divest from systems that cause harm.** Legislators should build a state budget that strengthens investments in communities of color, supports an equitable economic recovery, and divests from harmful systems and policies. This includes:
 - Investing in **basic and foundational needs** such as food assistance, child care, housing, education, public health, and health care – and including services for older people and people with disabilities.
 - Supporting **essential workers**, including by **funding negotiated collective bargaining agreements** for public employees.
 - **Ending the suspension of driver's licenses** of people who cannot pay a moving violation citation, which would alleviate financial and legal stress and hardship for thousands of Washingtonians each year.
 - Supporting the self-determination of communities of color in advancing their own investment solutions, including: adopting the priorities of **Washington for Black Lives** to defund and demilitarize the police and invest in BIPOC communities; and investing in the **Communities of Concern Commission**, which is working to grow financial capital assets in Washington’s communities of color.

The Washington State Budget & Policy Center is a research and policy organization that works to advance the economic well-being of all Washingtonians.

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