

the 2014 policy agenda

WASHINGTON
ROUNDTABLE

IN 2014, THE ROUNDTABLE WILL ADVOCATE FOR:

A SUSTAINABLE SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET THAT FUNDS THE STATE'S HIGHEST PRIORITIES, MAINTAINS ADEQUATE RESERVES AND ENCOURAGES ECONOMIC GROWTH.

If Washington's economy performs as forecasted, the state budget adopted in 2013 should remain balanced through the 2013-15 biennium. However, long-term sustainability is less certain and lawmakers should remain mindful of the need for additional education investments in future biennia. The Roundtable urges lawmakers to build reserves, enact budget reforms aimed at lowering the cost curve for state services and direct any new investments to services that drive long-term economic growth. Increased support for computer science and engineering programs at our postsecondary institutions, for example, will better prepare students for great job opportunities in our state.

A TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT AND REVENUE PACKAGE FOCUSED ON MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION, IMPROVEMENTS IN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC CORRIDORS AND EFFICIENCY REFORMS.

Without new investment in maintenance and preservation, half of our state's highway pavement will be in poor or very poor condition in 10 years. Lawmakers must enact a transportation revenue package that focuses investment on maintenance and preservation of existing transportation infrastructure and finishes projects in important economic corridors. To maximize the benefit of new investments, lawmakers should take steps to reform how the state plans, delivers and funds projects. They should also provide regional governance and financing structures that will enable metropolitan areas with disproportionate needs to better plan, prioritize and fund projects.

AN EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT PRIORITIZES COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS FOR ALL STUDENTS.

The Roundtable maintains its commitment to ensuring our state provides a quality college and career ready education for every student. Such an education depends on access to great teachers and is rooted in standards-based coursework and assessments. Lawmakers should implement the State Board of Education's recommended 24-credit high school diploma; require that student growth be a significant component of the multiple measures included in the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program; and encourage implementation of the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards and aligned Smarter Balanced Assessments, coupled with professional development for educators.

..... **PRIORITIES FOR 2014 (CONTINUED):**

..... **A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM PREPARED TO DEVELOP
TALENT, FOSTER INNOVATION AND DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH.**

Lawmakers should build on the progress made last year to prioritize investments in higher education, with a particular focus on computer science and engineering programs at our postsecondary institutions. Washington leads the nation in the creation of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) jobs. However, 25,000 jobs, heavily concentrated in the STEM disciplines, went unfilled in 2013 due to a lack of qualified candidates. At the same time, 1,200 qualified students were turned away from computer science and engineering programs at the state's higher education institutions due to lack of capacity. If Washington takes steps to better align its postsecondary system to prepare students and eliminate the job skills gap by 2017, a total of 160,000 new jobs will be created, generating an estimated \$720 million in annual state tax revenue.

..... **BUSINESS COST REFORMS AND REGULATORY POLICIES THAT WILL
RESULT IN A MORE COMPETITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE.**

Reforms enacted in 2011 to reduce workers' compensation and unemployment insurance (UI) costs in Washington state are having a positive impact. However, our state continues to rank highest for workers' compensation benefits paid. This puts employers operating here at a competitive disadvantage. Additional reforms are needed to keep and attract jobs.

The Washington Roundtable is a nonprofit public policy organization comprised of senior executives of major private sector employers across Washington state. Since 1983, the Roundtable has worked to create positive change on critical policy issues that foster economic growth, generate jobs and improve quality of life for Washingtonians. Areas of focus include: economic climate, infrastructure and education.



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www.waroundtable.com
Phone: 206-623-0180
Fax: 206-623-6576
Twitter: @waroundtable