



Messaging the Wins of the 2021 Legislative Session

Introduction

In recent years, we have redefined what it means to reckon with our past, demand better for our present, and hold a clear vision for our future. In 2020, a global pandemic and racial uprising in support of Black lives opened our eyes to what's been in front of us all along; while we fight to stay in our homes, stay employed, and stay alive, the powerful and wealthy few have been rigging our system for their own gain for decades, funneling money away from our communities and into their own pockets.

Across race and place we came together to demand something different. By turning out in record numbers, we elected leaders who would care for us and ensure the will of the people prevailed. We told our stories, we called out racist decisions of the past, and began to hold lawmakers accountable for our vision of the future - one where we can all earn a good living and have a good life, where we are safe and healthy in our communities, and our families can afford the care they need to get and stay well.

In 2021, our lawmakers were faced with a choice - make drastic cuts to the community services we rely on and extend the economic pain of the pandemic, or ask the wealthy few to pay a little bit more and keep money flowing to the neighborhoods where we all live. After engaging with us and hearing our stories, our progressive legislators worked against a tidal wave of opposition, and delivered progress on child care, health care, housing, police accountability, voting rights, and environmental protections for the people of Washington.

This is the story.

How To Use This Guide

The narratives in this guide can be used in many ways: in conversations with stakeholders and advocates, as letters to the editor or op-ed templates, in public statements and interviews, on messaging materials and websites, social media, and much more. These statements can be memorized like a script or copied and pasted into materials. They can also be adapted to fit your particular needs and circumstances.

The Core Narrative tells the story of progress from the 2021 legislative session, and is followed by six issue-specific narratives. The basic structure of these narratives should remain intact, but you are encouraged to adapt the specifics - like your heroes, villains, or call to action - to fit your audience or asset. If you are a partisan organization or campaign, you are invited to use partisan language.

The more specific you can be about who is getting in the way of your progress and how they are doing it, and how your heroes' lives will change when progress has been made, the more powerful your story will be.

When our words spread, they work. When our movement tells one unified story, we win.

Core Narrative

No matter where we live in Washington, most of us want similar things - a stable place to live, a nurturing place for our kids, a reliable income to support our families, and to see a doctor when we need to without worrying about the size of the bill.

For most Washingtonians, the Covid-19 pandemic revealed just how many of us have been barely getting by, and yet the rich and powerful have only gained more wealth. We got here because certain politicians have created loopholes and special deals for their powerful friends, lining their pockets with the money they funnel away from our schools, health care, and other supports that allow our communities to thrive. They create tax breaks and keep wages low in the interest of protecting wealthy “job creators,” when people like us are the real job creators. They blame regulations meant to keep us safe for the high costs of health care and child care. They have presided over a historic rise in housing costs that displace us from the neighborhoods where we’ve built our lives. Then, they turn around and try to convince us that Black and brown people are responsible for our own neighborhoods being unsafe, overpoliced, or unaffordable.

We know it doesn’t have to be this way. And that’s why in 2021 we came together across our differences of race, income, and zip code, and demanded that our lawmakers take bold action to reverse harmful policies of the past so that we have the tools to rebuild our communities as we recover from the pandemic. Progressive legislators listened to us, learned from us, and are making sure we have what we need to live healthy, vibrant lives.

Our progressive legislators are lowering costs and creating more good-paying jobs so we can take care of our loved ones and stay in our homes. They’re putting money back in our pockets so we can afford to shop at our local businesses. They are taking steps to ensure that we feel safe and welcome in our neighborhoods regardless of the color of our skin. They are making sure we have clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, and that health care is affordable no matter our stage in life. And, they are making sure the wealthy few finally pay what they owe in taxes, just like the rest of us.

These wins prove that when we demand change, our progressive lawmakers listen and take action. Together, we are building a more just, equitable, and prosperous future for everyone in Washington.

Issue-Specific Narratives

Going to Work and Taking Care of Our Families

Whether our homes are in a rural community or in a city, whether we were born here or choose to live here, we can agree that all our kids deserve a nurturing place to spend their days.

But in our past, certain politicians passed laws that made it more difficult for child care professionals to stay in business, making it impossible for us to find a safe place for our kids to go while we are at work. They continue to blame parents and providers for these failures, all while they've let the wealthiest few get away with not paying their share.

The Covid-19 pandemic made it clear to parents and employers that affordable, accessible child care plays a critical role in our economy. And that's why we came together to demand our lawmakers treat access to child care as a cornerstone of our economic recovery. Our progressive legislators listened and acted.

In 2021, progressive legislators made child care more affordable and accessible to more families while ensuring providers get a fair return on their work. Made up of mostly women of color, this workforce and the families they support are starting to be treated with the respect their work is due.

When schools shut down, child care professionals stepped up, caring for kids and facilitating online learning for school-agers. By coming together and demanding change, we are ensuring that every child in every neighborhood gets quality care from providers who are compensated fairly, so that parents can go to work.

A Home We Can Afford

Home. It's the place where we lay our heads, prepare our meals, and hug our loved ones. But for too long, this most basic of human needs - shelter - has been kept out of our reach by greedy developers and corporate landlords who rig the rules so they can jack up the rents, build homes only the wealthiest can afford, and grow their profits. They try to divide us by making us fear those who turn to cars or tents for shelter, all while making it impossible for many of us to afford a place to live. But we know it doesn't have to be this way.

In 2021, we went all in for all of us and demanded our lawmakers pass common sense solutions that ensure we all can make the rent and have enough leftover to care for our families. Progressive legislators created new laws to protect tenants from predatory landlords by ensuring legal protections from evictions and guaranteed representation in eviction court. Rental assistance is now available to those who need it, payment plans are accepted for paying back-rent, and thousands of new homes will be built for our neighbors with lower incomes, including permanent supportive housing for those who need help with mental health or addiction. We also fought to extend the eviction moratorium as long as necessary until these laws take effect, because renters need more time until protections are in place.

Together, we will ensure that all of us, no matter our race, our background, or how much money we have, have a home to nurture our families, pursue our dreams, and make our memories.

Feeling Safe and Welcome In Our Communities, No Matter Our Race

In Washington, we believe that all of us – Black, brown, or white – deserve to be safe in our own neighborhoods and that our neighborhoods are worthy of nurture and care. But racist, conservative, “tough on crime” leaders withhold resources and instead use our money to increase patrols r police misconduct and reform to the systems designed to keep white people in power.

After the uprisings in 2020, we came together across all races in every county focused on a vision for our future - one in which the color of our skin or where we were born doesn't determine how we are treated. Our progressive lawmakers heard us speak up for each other and in response they banned for-profit detention centers, restored voting rights to 20,000 of us who were impacted by the criminal legal system, and transformed oversight in law enforcement. Police are no longer allowed to use dangerous tactics like chokeholds and no-knock warrants, and there are set standards to make sure police de-escalate situations rather than use force.

If we continue to speak out together, we can create a future where public safety means safety for all of us, where Black and brown people can live our lives without fear, and where our tax dollars are spent keeping us housed, healthy, and in school.

Expanding and Protecting Access to Health Care

In Washington, we believe that no matter our race, income, zip code, sexual orientation, immigration status, or ability we have the right to see a health care provider regardless of cost. And we know that our health is negatively impacted by things like low wages, unemployment, food insecurity, housing insecurity, unclean air or water, and our upside-down tax system.

But for too long, certain politicians and corporate lobbyists have allowed insurance corporations, hospital chains, and big pharma to put profits above all else, while they deny us quality, affordable health care. They sow skepticism and fear by saying we'll lose access to our doctors if we make health care available for all, trying to divide us based on how much money we have or where we come from. But we know better.

In 2021 we joined together across generations, income level, and family size to demand our lawmakers prioritize our health. And our progressive legislators delivered.

Progressive legislators created news laws to ensure that our health care plan covers us, whether we're affirming our gender or making decisions about pregnancy. Those of us who are incarcerated are eligible for Medicaid for longer, and our state's paid family medical leave is available to more of us who need time off work to care for our loved ones. A new law mandating public long-term care benefits for Washington residents was expanded, and there are ongoing efforts to bring universal health care to Washington state.

When we go all in for all of us, we can do great things. Together, we are making Washington a place where all our families, at any age, can get the care we need, when we want it at a price we can afford.

Clean Air to Breathe and Clean Water to Drink

Whether we live in cities or forests, mountains or farmlands, we all want to protect our clean air and water for ourselves and future generations.

But for too long, fossil fuel CEOs and their lobbyists have distracted us with lies to keep us dependent on the dirty fuels that drive up their own profits. They pollute our air, poison our water, and dump toxins into Black and brown communities. They try to hide that they are to blame for how our health suffers during the smoky wildfire season. But we know there is another way.

By coming together across race and place to rewrite the rules, we demanded that our lawmakers do more to keep our air clean and our ecosystems healthy, and our progressive leaders listened and acted. A new Clean Fuel Standard will reduce pollution from transportation fuels. The Climate Commitment Act controls the amount of toxins that manufacturers release into our air and water. The HEAL Act begins to repair damage to Black and brown communities most affected by pollution and moves us closer to environmental justice.

Together, we are building a resilient future where working people like us can get to our jobs, live in healthy neighborhoods, and protect the Washington we know and love for future generations.

Requiring the Wealthy to Pay Their Share

No matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much we earn, most of us believe in pitching in to take care of our communities.

But in Washington, working families pay seven times more of their income in taxes than the wealthiest. Giant corporations and the super-wealthy few have rigged our tax code so that they pay the least, while we pay the most. They pit our communities against each other based on what we look like or what's in our wallets, hoping we'll look the other way while they rake in profits and reap the benefits of our contributions while refusing to pay their share.

Not only is this upside-down, but it's bad for our communities and our economy.

In 2021, we went all in for all of us and demanded that our lawmakers require the wealthiest who have done well in Washington to do right by Washingtonians. Our progressive leaders listened and took action.

Progressive legislators updated our tax code so that the wealthiest in Washington contribute a little bit more, while ensuring more of us can access affordable child care and return to our jobs. With the Working Families Tax Credit, progressive legislators are cutting taxes for more than 400,000 of us - including folks who file taxes with an Individual Tax ID Number, like undocumented workers and survivors of domestic violence - putting cash back in our pockets so we can provide for our families and afford to spend money in our communities.

When we join with others from all walks of life, we can truly create a stronger future for us all. Together, we are rewriting the rules so that all of us have what we need to be happy, healthy, and to support our communities.

Words to Embrace and Replace

Say:	Instead of:
<p>Whatever your...(race, income, zip code, etc)</p> <p>No matter...(how much money is in our wallets, where in Washington we live, the color of our skin, etc)</p> <p>Black, brown, or white</p> <p>Whether you were born here or just arrived here</p>	<p>Everyone, all people</p>
<p>Fully fund...</p> <p>Make sure...(children can learn in nurturing environments, we can go to the doctor without worrying about high fees, Black people can feel safe in our communities)</p> <p>Fair return on our work</p>	<p>Invest in...</p>
<p>Corporations and certain politicians manipulate our economy/education system to divert resources from communities of color</p>	<p>Education/wealth gap</p> <p>Disproportionately affects people of color</p>
<p>Ability to support our families/put food on the table</p> <p>Families' financial security</p> <p>Good paying job</p>	<p>The economy</p>
<p>Our representatives</p> <p>Our elected officials</p>	<p>Politicians</p> <p>The Government</p>
<p>People-first language (people experiencing homelessness)</p>	<p>The homeless</p> <p>The poor</p>
<p>Housing is a basic, human need</p>	<p>Housing rights</p>
<p>Corporate landlords and a few politicians have prevented Black and brown people from buying homes, preyed on working families through predatory mortgages and high rents, and gutted support for affordable public housing</p>	<p>Rents are rising, neighborhoods are gentrifying</p>

Say:	Instead of:
Use our tax dollars to fund social services that keep people safe and help keep our communities vibrant	Defund/abolish the police (alone)
People-first language People with past felony convictions People impacted by the criminal legal system Formerly-incarcerated people	Felons/convicts/ex-cons/offenders/parolees
Criminal legal system	Criminal justice system
See a doctor when we are sick Get the care we need Get and stay well	The Health Care System
Some elected leaders and corporate employers keep up color-coded barriers to relief and protection from the virus, putting people of color at risk	COVID is especially fatal for/ disproportionately affects people of color
Keep our air and water clean Rules and fines to keep corporations from polluting our air/dumping toxins in our communities	Regulations Government steps
Dirty fuels Outdated fuels	Fossil fuel energy
Create healthy and safe communities, protect our families' and children's health Clean air to breathe and clean water to drink	Fix climate change/global warming
Wealthy few who rig the rules Certain politicians	The wealthy, the rich
Shared contribution Contribute our share	Tax burden; tax relief
Pay what they owe	Tax the rich, fair share

Say:	Instead of:
Ensure our schools and communities have the resources they need	Close corporate loopholes End tax breaks
Corporations	Businesses
Free ride off of what we contribute	Tax breaks/avoid paying taxes