

# Messaging

the **Progressive Wins**  
of the Washington State Legislature



# Introduction

In recent years, Washingtonians from across race and place have come together to demand better conditions for our lives today and reimagine our vision for the future. For most of us, a global pandemic and historic uprising in support of Black lives opened our eyes to what's been in front of us all along - we live inside a system designed and maintained by the wealthy white and powerful few. While we fight to stay in our homes, stay employed, and stay alive, they work to protect the growth of their wealth and power while refusing to contribute to the communities we all share.

So, we came together to demand something different. By turning out in record numbers, we elected leaders who would care for us and ensure that 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 are all paid the true value of our work, we all live in a home we can afford, we are safe and healthy in our communities, and our families can access the care they need to get and stay well, no exceptions.

## **Across race and place we came together to demand something different.**

The ongoing pandemic has revealed deep cracks in the foundations of our communities. The leaders we elected had a choice to make: reckon with the inequitable laws of the past and change them, or allow them to continue to harm us. After engaging with us and hearing our stories, it was Democrats who worked against a tidal wave of opposition and delivered progress on access to child care, health care, and housing. It was Democrats who created solutions for police accountability, and who advanced voting rights and environmental protections for the people of Washington. It was Democrats who protected our right to abortion care and enacted laws to make us safer from gun violence. And it was Democrats who ensured that the wealthiest in Washington finally started to pay what they truly owe in taxes to our communities.

**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 letter-to-the-editor or op-ed templates, in public statements and interviews, on messaging materials, 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 recent legislative sessions, and is followed by seven issue-specific narratives. We've included specific examples of recent laws passed in each issue area, and we encourage you to highlight these or others as you see fit. 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. To make these narratives c3 friendly, simply replace "Democrats" with "progressive lawmakers".

The more specific you can be about who (active agent/villain) is getting in the way of progress on an issue, how they are doing it, and how your heroes' life will change when progress has been made, the more persuasive and powerful your narrative will be.

**heroes,  
villains,  
call to  
action**

**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 community for our kids, a reliable income to support our families, and to see a doctor when we're sick without worrying about the bill.

For most Washingtonians, the Covid-19 pandemic is revealing just how many of us have been barely getting by while the wealthiest and most powerful take more wealth and power. We got here because lawmakers in our past, who were mostly white and wealthy, created laws to benefit people like themselves. Instead of adequately funding the schools where our kids learn, creating homes we can all afford, or ensuring our air and water is clean enough to breathe and drink, they have been lining their pockets with the wealth our work creates. Wealthy corporations refuse to pay us a fair return on our work, and refuse to pay what they owe in taxes. They blame regulations meant to keep us safe for the high costs of healthcare and child care. They have ignored a historic rise in housing costs that displace us from the neighborhoods where we've built our lives. Then, they shame those of us who turn to social services for help, or to tents for shelter.

We know it doesn't have to be this way. And that's why 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. And it was Democrats who listened to us, learned from us, and are making sure we have what we need to live healthy, vibrant lives.

Democrats are ensuring we're paid the true value of our work so we can meet our basic needs, take care of our loved ones, and stay in our homes. They are 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 healthcare is affordable no matter our stage in life. And, they are making sure the wealthy few finally pay what they truly owe to our communities in taxes.

When we demand change, our lawmakers listen and take action. Together, we are building a more just, equitable, and prosperous future for everyone in Washington.

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

## Issue-Specific Narratives

# Going to Work and Taking Care of Our Families

Whether we live in a rural area or in a city, were born here or chose to live here, we can agree that all our kids deserve a nurturing place to spend their days - be it in child care, at preschool, or getting a K-12 education - so that parents can go to work knowing their child is being cared for.

But for years, child care has been a luxury that many parents in Washington either cannot afford or don't have access to. Preschools are understaffed and your zip code determines whether K-12 schools in your neighborhood have modern textbooks or enrichment programs. That's because politicians of our past created laws that made it more difficult for child care professionals to stay in business, and chose not to fund our schools equally. They try to distract us by blaming parents and providers for these failures, hoping we won't come together and demand better for our kids and our livelihoods.

But the Covid-19 pandemic made it clear to parents and employers that affordable, accessible child care, and safe, reliable schools play a critical role in the health of our communities. When we told our stories to our lawmakers, it was Democrats who listened and acted.

By coming together and demanding change, we are ensuring that providers are compensated fairly, parents can go to work, and every child in every neighborhood can learn in world-class schools, no exceptions.

## You can talk about our champions:

- ensuring our schools and child care centers have the resources to keep our kids growing up healthy and educated
- passing laws that put cash back in parents' pockets so that we can provide for the basic needs of our families
- making sure that the people who care for our kids get fair pay for their work

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

# Requiring the Wealthy to Pay What They Owe

**We should have the freedom to make meaningful choices about our lives, no matter what we look like or what's in our wallets.**

But in Washington, working families - who pay seven times more of our income in taxes than the wealthiest - have little choice when it comes to the communities we live in and the ways in which they are underfunded. For decades, white and wealthy politicians of our past - influenced by wealthy corporations - have designed and maintained a tax code that enables a powerful few to build unimaginable amounts of concentrated wealth. While the rest of us foot the bill for the schools where our kids learn, the parks we play in, and the roads we drive on, they are able to live on their wealth and pass it on to their descendents nearly tax-free. They hope that while we're fighting for what we need to live that we won't come together and demand that they pay what they truly owe in taxes to our communities. But that's exactly what we're doing.

In recent years, thousands of us have joined together to hold our legislators accountable for bringing more balance to our tax code.

Washingtonians joined together from all walks of life to make sure that a recovery from the pandemic includes and centers the needs of low-income, undocumented, and communities of color that have been most harmed by our unjust tax code. Together, we are rewriting the rules so that our communities are funded equitably, and all of us have what we need to be happy and healthy.

## **You can talk about our champions:**

- making the ultra-wealthy pay what they owe to our communities in taxes
- putting cash back in the pockets of working people
- Getting relief to those of us struggling with unemployment and debt

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

# A Home We Can Afford

Home. It's the place where we lay our heads, prepare our meals, and hug our loved ones. But this most basic of human needs - shelter - has been kept out of reach for many of us for decades. Corporate landlords and greedy developers have spent years influencing legislators to keep laws in place that allow them to jack up the rents, build homes only the wealthiest can afford, and grow their profits. They oppose increasing affordable housing options in our neighborhoods. Then they push public narratives that make us fear those who turn to cars or tents for shelter and shame those of us who rely on social services. They use this fear to divide us, because they know that if we work together, we can win.

In recent years, we demanded our lawmakers pass common sense solutions to ensure we all can make the rent and have enough leftover to care for our families. And it was Democrats who took meaningful action.

## **You can talk about our champions:**

- creating new laws to protect renters from predatory landlords
- providing more rent assistance to those who need it
- funding new housing that will be affordable and supportive for our neighbors with lower incomes and disabilities

**No matter our race, our background, or how much money we have, we all deserve to have a home where we can nurture our families, pursue our dreams, and make our memories.**

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

# Justice for Black and Indigenous Communities

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.

Throughout our state's history, some white elected leaders and law enforcement have deprived Black and brown communities of resources, overpoliced our neighborhoods, and built a criminal legal system that only benefits the white people in power. The police who have sworn to serve and protect have been allowed to target us, killing our Black and Native friends and neighbors without accountability. All the while, some politicians and media today stoke fear against Black protesters and survivors of police violence; they know that if we are divided we won't demand justice for police misconduct and reform to the systems designed to keep white people in power.

After the uprisings in 2020, people of all races came together in every county in Washington to fight for our vision for our future - one in which the color of our skin or where we were born doesn't determine how we are treated.

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 educated.

## You can talk about our champions:

- enacting groundbreaking accountability measures that encourage de-escalation of situations over using dangerous force
- introducing an alert system for missing Indigenous people
- paving the way for further reform by restoring voting rights to people with past felony convictions

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace



# Feeling Safe and Welcome in our Communities

No matter who we are or what we look like, we all want to feel safe when we enter our places of worship, go out with our friends, or learn in our schools.

But today, some legislators who are more responsive to the gun lobby than to the will of the people block legislation that would prevent mass shootings, and introduce bills that would result in more community harm. They try to distract us from their failure to protect us from gun violence by rehashing proposals that put even more guns into our schools and into our communities. But we are the ones who know what keeps us safe.

We came together and talked to our lawmakers about keeping our communities safe for everyone, and Democrats took action.

The will of the people must matter more than power and profit. When we come together we can make sure that our lawmakers take action so that we can all feel safe as we go about our daily lives, no matter our identities or beliefs.

**we came together  
across all races  
in every county  
focused on a vision  
for our future**

## **You can talk about our champions:**

- Banning ghost guns and high capacity magazines (often used in mass shootings)
- Banning open carry in certain locations
- Creating rules for removing firearms from domestic violence perpetrators
- Creating the office of Firearm Violence Prevention to collect data on firearm violence for public health research

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

# 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 without breaking the bank. And we know that our health suffers when our paychecks don't cover our food and rent, when our air and water are polluted, and when we have to work long hours in unsafe conditions just to scrape by.

But for too long, certain politicians and corporate lobbyists have helped insurance corporations, hospital chains, and big pharmaceutical corporations put profits above all else, while they deny us quality, affordable health care. And, every year, certain lawmakers try to pass policies meant to outright deny us the abortion care we need.

And that's why we've joined together across generations, income level, gender, and family size to demand our lawmakers prioritize our health. Democrats delivered.

Together, we are making Washington a place where we can get the care we need, no matter how old we are or how much money we have in the bank.

## You can talk about our champions:

- ensuring our freedom to decide if and when to have a child by protecting our access to abortion care
- creating new laws to ensure that our health care plans cover us, whether we're affirming our gender or making decisions about pregnancy
- extending Medicaid benefits so they are available to some of us for longer
- improving our state's paid family medical leave to cover more of us who need time off work to care for our loved ones

**CLICK HERE** for words to embrace and replace

# 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 convinced us that we have to stay dependent on the dirty fuels that drive up their own profits. They influence our lawmakers and block new laws so they can continue to pollute our air, poison our water, and dump toxins into lower income communities and communities of color. They try to hide that they are to blame for how our health suffers during the smoky wildfire season. And they are counting on us to do nothing about it.

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 it was Democrats who listened and took action.

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.

## **You can talk about our champions:**

- passing a new Clean Fuel Standard to reduce pollution from transportation fuels
- controlling the amount of toxins that manufacturers release into our air and water
- beginning to repair damage to Black and brown communities most affected by pollution through the HEAL Act
- funding transportation choices that will get us where we need to go while protecting our clean air and water

**CLICK HERE** for words  
to embrace and replace

# Words to Embrace and Replace

## Core Narrative

Say:

Instead of:

Whatever your...(race, income, zip code, etc)

Everyone, all people

No matter...(how much money is in our wallets, where in Washington we live, the color of our skin, etc)

Black, brown, or white

Whether you were born here or just arrived here

Corporations and certain politicians manipulate our laws to divert funding from communities of color.

Racial wealth gap  
Disproportionately affects people of color

Our representatives  
Our elected officials

Politicians  
The Government

## Going to Work and Taking Care of Our Families

Say:

Instead of:

Fully fund...

Invest in...

Make sure...(children can learn in nurturing environments, we can see a doctor when we're sick, Black people can feel safe in our communities)

Fair return on our work  
Paid the true value of our work

Raise wages

Ability to support our families/put food on the table  
Families' financial security  
Good paying jobs

The economy

## Requiring the Wealthy to Pay What They Owe

Say:

Instead of:

Wealthy few who rig the rules  
Certain politicians

The wealthy, the rich

Shared contribution  
Contribute our share

Tax burden, tax relief

Pay what they truly owe our communities in taxes

Tax the rich, fair share

Ensure our schools and communities have the  
resources they need

Close corporate loopholes  
End tax breaks

Wealthy corporations

Businesses

Free ride off of what we contribute

Tax breaks, avoid paying taxes

## A Home We Can Afford

Say:

Instead of:

People-first language (people experiencing  
homelessness)

The homeless  
The poor

Housing is a basic human need

Housing rights

Corporate landlords and a few politicians have  
prevented Black and brown people from buying  
homes, hurt working families through predatory  
mortgages and high rents, and gutted support for  
affordable public housing.

Rents are rising, neighborhoods  
are gentrifying

## Feeling Safe and Welcome in Our Communities & Justice for Black and Indigenous Communities

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 impacted by the criminal legal system  
Formerly-incarcerated people  
People with a conviction history

Felons/convicts/ex-cons/  
offenders/parolees

Criminal legal system

Criminal justice system

## Expanding and Protecting Access to Health Care

Say:

Instead of:

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

## Clean Air to Breathe and Clean Water to Drink

Say:

Instead of:

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  
Fight climate change

# the **Communications Hub**

The progressive movement has  
a compelling story to tell.



Powered by Fuse Washington

The Communications Hub is a nonprofit communications program housed  
at Fuse Washington serving communicators across Washington state.