

# The State of the State Address

## Governor Jay Inslee

*"Our state, our destiny"*

As prepared for delivery at 12:00 p.m., January 9, 2018 House Chambers, Washington State Capitol

Thank you, Jasmit, for those timely and empowering words.

Thank you to the Wenatchee High School Vocal Jazz Ensemble for that inspiring rendition of our national anthem.

And a big thank you to my wife, Trudi, my entire family, and in particular, my mother-in-law, the original Trudy, who tells me that her first 100 years in Washington have been pretty great.

I welcome the new legislators in your ranks, Senator Manka Dhingra, Senator Keith Wagoner, and Representative Carolyn Eslick. May you all do good work here.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Madam Chief Justice, distinguished justices of the court, members of the Legislature, tribal leaders, state and local government officials, members of the Consular Corps, and most importantly, my fellow Washingtonians:

I am honored to stand before you once again to report on the state of Washington state.

Because of the work we have done together in the past five years, our state has made crucial investments in our schools and colleges, our highways and transit systems, and our health care system.

The minimum wage was raised for Washington's workers, and last year, we passed the best paid family leave program in the nation.

We have invested in our people. That's why our state has one of the country's fastest-growing economies, why it was named the Top State for Business, and why statewide unemployment is at a historic low.

Our economy is strong. Our future is bright. But there are always new heights to reach, new challenges to overcome, and persistent wrongs to right.

When our state's first governor, Elisha Ferry, delivered his message to our inaugural Legislature, he challenged legislators to think big.

"It is your province," he said, "to make precedents, not to follow them; to mark the way, that others may walk in the path which you have made."

We have been walking in that path that Governor Ferry and the first Legislature set for this state 128 years ago. Today, it is up to us to continue that work for future generations.

This year we cannot focus just on the length of this session, which is short. We have a duty to focus on our legacy, which can be long. Several opportunities are in front of us to forge a prosperous path for the next generation.

Access to democracy is a cornerstone to the enduring health of our nation and state, so let's leave a legacy of a stronger democracy by increasing voter participation and equitable representation. It is time to pass the Washington Voting Rights Act, automatic voter registration, and Election Day registration.

And speaking of a stronger democracy, let's leave a legacy that supports our modern democracy — and our modern economy — by ensuring equal access to the internet. When Washington, D.C., takes away that protection, we must protect net neutrality for our people, for our businesses, and for the virtues of free speech.

At a time when women's health care rights are under attack throughout our nation, let's leave a legacy that ensures full access to contraception and allows women to chart their own course. That includes access to long-acting reversible contraception and reproductive parity.

And not all of our work is in passing bills.

Right now, let's all — elected leaders and employers alike — commit to inclusive workplaces where everyone is safe from sexual harassment and assault. This is one of the most persistent wrongs that our society must make right.

This session, let's also continue our outstanding legacy on education.

Legislators can take pride that they passed a plan that will fully comply with the McCleary decision.

I commend Senators John Braun and Christine Rolfes, and Representatives Pat Sullivan, Timm Ormsby, and David Taylor, and so many others who have helped achieve this bipartisan success.

But the Supreme Court has made it clear that the plan needs to start one year earlier, and fortunately, we have the reserves to do that.

It is crucial that we implement the McCleary plan now, because a child is only a third grader once and you don't get that year back.

But our work on education does not stop at McCleary.

We have to stop telling our children that a four-year degree is the only path to success. That simply is not true.

Let's leave a legacy of opportunity for all our students by expanding career-connected learning.

My budget includes funding to help us continue our Career Connect Washington initiative, which has the potential to be one of the most exciting and meaningful things we can do for our students.

During a study mission to Switzerland last year, our Washington delegation saw a truly remarkable apprenticeship system stemming from a robust partnership with business, labor, and academia. There is no reason our own students cannot have better access to those same opportunities here in Washington.

Please let me recognize the chairs of that delegation who are in the gallery today: former U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein Suzi LeVine and her husband, Eric LeVine.

Thank you for your visionary work on this issue.

You can go to Tacoma and see for yourself how this works. It was a joy last year to celebrate our state's first 15 registered youth apprentices as they prepared to launch rewarding careers in aerospace. Let's expand that opportunity, as well as apprenticeship programs for our veterans and other Washingtonians, in the coming years.

This session, let's leave a legacy of compassion by continuing our work on mental and behavioral health care. This is a persistent challenge that intersects our efforts to end homelessness, to improve our criminal justice system, and to combat an opioid epidemic that kills an average of two Washingtonians each day.

We must build upon our current work on opioids, pursue innovative approaches to affordable housing, and strengthen our partnerships with counties to help us foster healthy communities.

Let's continue our bipartisan legacy of helping Dreamers fulfill their potential. This is a time of great uncertainty and fear for our Dreamers and their families. Let's pass legislation now to ensure the availability of College Bound scholarships for Dreamers, even if the federal government fails to renew their deferred-action status.

Let's leave a legacy of common-sense measures that help end the scourge of gun violence. Our state's voters have demonstrated strong support for such measures. We can continue our commitment to public safety and health by banning bump stocks, closing the loophole on semi-automatic rifles, and requiring the safe storage of firearms.

Let's leave a legacy that upholds the equal application of justice by passing a bill to end the death penalty in the state of Washington.

And let's make sure we don't leave a legacy of irresponsible brinksmanship. It is absolutely crucial that we pass a capital budget as one of the first orders of business this session.

This budget supports more than 19,000 construction jobs in every corner of the state.

It would help us build more affordable housing and expand capacity in our mental health system. This funding is languishing at exactly the same time the need for these projects is exploding.

In Yakima, students are waiting for renovations to alleviate overcrowding at East Valley High School.

In Sequim, biologists are waiting for upgrades at the Dungeness Hatchery to improve fish passage.

In Ephrata, the community is waiting for the replacement of an aging water line.

If you want to help rural Washington — if you want more affordable housing, better mental health care and school construction — then do something about it and send this capital budget to my desk now.

As we gather to do the people's work this session, Washington's values and this Legislature's actions will be more important than ever.

Despite the onslaught of divisiveness, disorder, and disrespect coming from the White House this past year, the people of our state have stood proudly together.

The world should know that we are going to keep standing up for civility, tolerance, and liberty. We will fight to protect Washingtonians' health care, women's right to choose, the right for people to be safe from discrimination, and the right to clean air and water.

We will not be intimidated.

Washington state has so much to be proud of. Our biotech companies are creating new treatments for cancer. Scientists at Hanford have helped confirm the existence of gravitational waves. We even make world-famous beer and wine.

And we should be proud of the great progress we have made together in state government.

When I came into office, there was doubt we could pass a transportation package. But we did, and it is the largest and greenest transportation package in state history.

When I came into office, there was doubt we could invest \$7 billion in education. But we did.

We tackled transportation. We tackled education. And now we must recognize an existential threat to the health of our state, a threat to the health of our children, and a threat to the health of our businesses that demands action.

That threat is climate change.

The Legislature recognized this threat a decade ago — a decade ago — when it pledged to the people of Washington that we would make our air cleaner and reduce carbon pollution. But unless we act this year, that promise will be broken.

It is time to step up and give our citizens what they demand and deserve — and what is the law — which is a fight against climate change and the damaging health effects of carbon pollution.

While this session is short, our legacy on climate change must be long and lasting.

We have just 59 days to do our part to save our children from an endless cycle of crop-killing droughts one year and rivers spilling their banks the next. To save salmon from dying in ever-warming rivers and our forests from being reduced to plumes of ash.

We have allowed the unfettered release of carbon pollution into our air. That burden will be carried by our children, our economy, our security, and our quality of life.

We must be victorious over climate change, because, as Winston Churchill said, "... without victory, there is no survival."

I believe Washingtonians will be together on this issue.

On this, there is no geographic divide. The Eastern Washington farmer whose irrigation supply is threatened by low snowpack faces the same crisis as the Western Washington shellfish grower whose baby oysters are threatened by ocean acidification.

There is no age divide. The young child suffering from asthma is just as vulnerable as a grandparent suffering from COPD, a lung disease aggravated by heat and air pollution.

And there is no partisan divide. Nationally respected Republicans and Democrats are among those calling for a tax on carbon pollution.

Support for enacting a price on carbon is growing. Members of the business, tribal, environmental, and labor communities from across our state are coming to the table to talk about carbon pricing.

Some of them are here today, including Microsoft and Puget Sound Energy, which have enacted bold changes in the way they do business.

Labor leaders see the job potential in growing our clean energy economy. Our environmental leaders and tribes see the urgency of acting now to curb carbon

pollution. They all agree that putting a price on carbon this year is the right thing to do, and have committed to working with me to get that accomplished.

House and Senate members also have been working closely with my office all summer and fall to design a Washington-focused approach, and their contributions have been key.

So we are joined across geography, across age, and across political interests. Now is the time to join in action and put a price on carbon pollution.

Doing so will allow us to reinvest in all the things that drive down emissions. We can build more solar panels. We can put more electric cars on the road. We can help more Washingtonians purchase energy-saving insulation for their homes and businesses.

We can reduce the wildfire risk in rural communities and on tribal lands. We can improve utility services and modernize the electrical grid. We can make much-needed upgrades to our irrigation and water-management systems. We can prepare our workforce for new careers in clean energy.

And by doing these things, we can save our forests. We can help rural economies. We can protect our waterways.

I am optimistic about this year, and that optimism is well justified by Washington's can-do spirit of confidence and innovation. And why shouldn't we get this done?

Carbon pricing is hardly a new or bold idea.

British Columbia, our neighbor to the north, is doing it.

To the south, California is doing it, and Oregon is considering it.

From Quebec to Japan, from Europe to Mexico, many states and nations have enacted a price on carbon. Even China is getting on board, having recently launched the largest carbon market on the planet.

By passing a carbon tax, we would simply join our West Coast neighbors, and the rest of the world, as the global economy moves away from fossil fuels and toward a decarbonized, clean-energy future.

And I believe that Washington is exactly the state to lead the clean-energy economy and seize the jobs that China and other nations are clamoring for.

This is who we are. We create, we invent, we build. And the people of Washington are ready to create, invent, and build the carbon-free future our children and grandchildren deserve.

These clean-energy jobs belong here. Not just in China. Not just in Germany. Not just in B.C. here.

Washington employs some of the most influential climate scientists in the world. Our universities and businesses are on the cutting edge of clean-energy technologies.

In the Pacific Coast region, clean-energy jobs have grown more than twice as fast as jobs in the overall economy.

Mukilteo is home to the inventors and manufacturers of the world's largest vanadium flow battery. Moses Lake is home to one of the world's largest carbon fiber manufacturing plants for electric cars. Our state is home to the inventors of biofuels that have powered the Boeing 787 across the oceans.

It is our state's destiny — because of who we are — to defeat climate change.

Even if the White House walks away from the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we will walk forward and join this battle for our world's healthy future.

Already, Washington has joined with 14 other states and territories to form the U.S. Climate Alliance, and we are committed to meeting our share of the emission reduction targets outlined in the Paris Climate Accord. This is a significant collaboration. We represent 40 percent of the U.S. economy, and if we were our own nation, we would have the third-largest economy in the world.

And it is right that we do this.

Washington is home to the most beautiful collection of fertile wheat fields, towering forests and salty waters on Earth. It's true: Our Creator practiced on the rest of the planet, and then created Washington state.

Every single one of us is deeply tied to Washington. We each have our own parts of this state that we love: a favorite fishing spot, a quiet place on the farm,



that campground in the forest. But the things we treasure individually can only be saved collectively.

We have been given an incredible bounty of natural beauty and sustenance, and we now must ask ourselves how we can protect that bounty for future generations.

We know we are smart enough to recognize the perils of climate change, and we know we are innovative enough to do something about it.

Repeatedly, over the decades, we have lived up to Governor Ferry's charge "to mark the way."

We have succeeded in aerospace, in software, in online commerce, in coffee, in biotechnology, and there is every reason to believe we will succeed in fighting climate change and growing our economy in the process.

This is the year to believe in ourselves. This is the year to act with confidence. This is the year for us to do our part, for all who will walk in the path we will make, together.

We are here in Olympia to serve the current and future interests of all Washingtonians, and I thank each of you for your willingness to find solutions to the challenges we face.

I like to think of this Legislature and our state as one big family: We may have differences around the dinner table, but on what really counts, we agree.

We all agree that our families deserve to be safe from tragedies like mass shootings. We all agree we must do more for homeless individuals and families. We all agree that our children deserve the best education possible. We all agree that our communities deserve protection from the physical and financial threats of climate change.

Today I call on all of us to look deep into our hearts and to think of our families. For them, and for all Washingtonians, let's get to work together.

Thank you.