

2020

**THE BEST OF
WHO WE
ARE**



January 14, 2020
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The State of the State Address

Governor Jay Inslee

“The best of who we are”

As prepared for delivery at noon, January 14, 2020
House Chambers, Washington State Capitol

Thank you, Imam Adam Jamal, for your moving invocation.

Thank you, BACH Home School Choir, for the lovely rendition of the national anthem. This choir was unable to perform as scheduled in the Capitol during December and we're happy we can welcome them back for that missed opportunity.

I extend a warm welcome to former Governor and Ambassador Gary Locke and thank him for his distinguished service at the state and federal levels.

I also welcome Sweden's Ambassador to the United States Karin Olofsdotter, who is visiting Washington to promote economic development and trade.

I'm honored to be the first Washington governor to say Madam Speaker, Mr. President, 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.

One of the best things about being the governor is shining the light on how great Washington is. I love that part of my job.

I'm inspired by many Washington stories.

I'm inspired by Fife High School senior Brynna Nixon, who is here today. She's the first female quarterback in our state's history to throw a touchdown pass for a high school football team.

I'm inspired by the development of Washington's newest apple, the Cosmic Crisp. Several people from Washington State University are here, including Kate

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Evans, who heads WSU's apple breeding program, and Agriculture School Dean André Wright. These Washington apples adorn your desks.

There are so many great things going on in our universities. I'm inspired by the University of Washington team who developed an app to monitor a person's breathing rate and detect an opioid overdose.

Both the Cougars and Huskies show how broad the innovative culture is in our state.

It is inspiring to see Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis here, the first Native American to join our State Supreme Court.

I'm constantly inspired by the work of our public employees. Right now, as we are among friends in the warmth of the Capitol, our State Patrol and Department of Transportation employees are working around the clock to make sure that people are safe on our icy roads. They have our gratitude and well wishes for working safely.

Washington has felt deep losses this past year. Courageous first responders gave their lives for us, as they do too often. We lost:

- Okanogan County Fire District 3's Assistant Fire Chief Christian Johnson
- Kittitas County Sheriff's Deputy Ryan Thompson
- Cowlitz County Sheriff's Deputy Justin DeRosier
- Lynden Interim Police Chief Michael Knapp
- Pierce County Deputy Cooper Dyson
- East Olympia Volunteer Fire Captain John Ostergard
- And a member of our military family on duty, Sergeant First Class Dustin B. Ard

On behalf of all Washingtonians, I express our respect and condolences to their families.

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Last year we also lost Bill Ruckelshaus, a true statesman in both Washingtons who left us an unmatched environmental legacy.

We are missing a face in the House chambers today. We lost Jim Richards, the communications director for the House majority. Jim's life was dedicated to public service and helping others.

Those who put service above self should inspire us all, including the new legislators in your ranks: Senator Ron Muzzall and Representatives Davina Duerr, Alex Ramel and Jesse Johnson.

And congratulations to Derek Stanford for moving to the Senate and to Senator Liz Lovelett on her election. I thank them for stepping up to improve the lives of all Washingtonians.

Because fundamentally that's why we're here.

One of our deepest Washington values is summoning the courage to explore and embrace big ideas, ideas that change our lives.

The people who power our state's successes share a common element: a stalwart and unbending commitment to be better, to get the job done and never resign to those timid souls who think the status quo is good enough.

Our embrace of new ideas speaks to who we are as a people.

And, as we start a new decade, we should reflect on how we've achieved that.

We were willing to imagine where we could go if we accepted challenges that at first felt impossible.

We can do this because we recognize we belong to one community.

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We forge profound forces for good when we unite — not divide — around our best ideas.

Last year, I stood here and challenged us to rise up and write one of the worthiest chapters of our time, one that future generations will thank us for. And I'm incredibly proud and grateful for your leadership. Your accomplishments speak to a remarkably productive and positive session before us.

Look at what we've done. Together, we've created:

- A Washington where we can rely on paid family and medical leave so you can be there to care for a spouse during their weekly cancer treatments.
- A Washington where your 18-year-old daughter graduates from high school as a registered apprentice in aerospace, with full-time employment already lined up.
- A Washington where we passed the best 100 percent clean energy and energy efficiency measures in the United States.
- A Washington where people will be able to afford the long-term care they need as they age.
- And a Washington where we can rightfully boast of the single best college financial aid program in the nation, which means more students qualify for free tuition than ever before.

Now this isn't just *me* talking. The world has noticed. Because of all the things we've done together, U.S. News & World Report named Washington the best state in the country.

Washington state indeed embodies the best of America. We've been honored to be both the best place to do business and the best place to be an employee. That combination is a rare and powerful testament to our state.

And it says a lot about how we face challenges.

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I want to tell you a story about how we all achieved one of our greatest successes and how that charts a course as we look to tackle another big challenge. That success story is about Washington's nation-leading, innovative, inclusive and life-changing Career Connect Learning initiative.

We have known for a long time that we have some high school students who don't see themselves attending college. We have college students unsure about what their post-degree future looks like. And we have midcareer workers who need new skills and training to keep the jobs of today and be ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

But a number of our educational and training programs across the state weren't integrated, making it hard for people to get the skills they need.

So we've built an entire system around helping people find multiple paths to meaningful careers. For some, it's apprenticeships. For others, it's traditional higher education.

We are also working to boost training for mid-career workers. Career Connect recognizes every student for who they want to be in any workplace.

This involves business, labor, community colleges, universities, K-12, philanthropy, and local and state governments. It took each and every partnership to build a system of registered apprenticeships, job certifications and classroom education.

It's so gratifying to hear about people living their dreams because of what we're doing.

Ironworkers Local 86 is one of the many apprenticeship programs that expanded pathways to entry and attracted more students — and more diverse students — through Career Connect.

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One of these students is apprentice Robert Arce, who moved to Washington to make a better life for himself and his fiancée, leaving a gang environment behind. He was homeless for a time — at least six months — sleeping in his car. Robert received boots, tools, hands-on knowledge and experience that set him up for success. This experience, he said, has been everything to him and his family. Before the program, he had never used a drill or a hammer. Today, he's two years into a four-year apprenticeship in Tukwila and looks forward to a better future for himself and his growing family. Thank you, Robert, for being here and sharing your story.

Another story comes out of Spokane. Olivia Perkins joined the Production and Manufacturing Academy to get exposure to hands-on welding. She wanted to create and sell her own metal artwork. Greater Spokane Incorporated paired with the academy to make this career-connected opportunity a reality. Olivia took an hour-and-a-half bus ride — each way — and then walked a mile and a half — each way — just to attend class. Because of her efforts, she received a full scholarship to Spokane Community College and will become a professional welder because of her academy experience. Congratulations to Olivia, who is also here with us today.

Stories like these show how targeted career launch programs provide opportunity to diverse populations who may not have had a chance before.

We are growing registered apprenticeships in new sectors, too. The multi-employer, multi-union health care apprenticeship sponsored by the SEIU 1199 Training Trust, built in partnership with Kaiser Permanente, is one such success.

I stood at Kaiser Permanente in a room of business and labor leaders and heard how they worked together to make that happen, and how they are committed to keep working together to make sure it is a success.

We are already helping thousands of people across the state.

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Our goal is nothing short of meaningful career training for anyone who wants it. We want to be able to welcome all people to the prosperity of Washington.

We can serve a 19-year-old who wants to learn a technical trade and a 42-year-old midcareer worker who needs the latest skills. We've made it affordable, too, and expect to serve more than 100,000 students this coming school year with help from the Washington College Grant.

You can see how groups such as business and labor, government and philanthropy were important to this success. This is what it's going to take to meet our next big challenge — combating homelessness.

Homelessness reaches all ages, all races, all backgrounds. And we know there is no one cause.

This doesn't impact just people experiencing a mental health challenge or a chemical dependency problem. Thousands of people know that Washington is the best place to live and work in the United States. So they came here. That's a good thing. And while we're pleased with our economic growth, we also have people who faced economic problems that put affording a place of their own out of reach — in part because more people are coming to the state than we have housing for.

It's not just people living in tents, under freeways, in wet cardboard boxes. We have families living in cars. Veterans who need help staying in their apartment. Single parents facing financial struggles. High school students sleeping on other people's couches when they can find one. Too many people are one financial crisis away from being homeless.

Each year in the past decade, we've done more to address homelessness and housing affordability. We've doubled our investment in homelessness response

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after the recession. I thank you for your leadership on that. We've combated several causes of homelessness, like opioid addiction and mental illness. We've laid a strong foundation.

But I've seen this growing crisis firsthand. I've seen how it affects Centralia, Bellingham, Spokane, Tacoma and Bremerton.

We have an obligation to help solve the problem. Our compassion will not allow us to look the other way.

To be successful, our response level must match the scope of this crisis. Homelessness is a statewide problem and it needs a statewide response.

Responding to homelessness can't mean moving people down the road, to someone else's city or to the next bridge. It's about giving them the tools and resources they need to get back on their feet. It's about prevention, it's about rent assistance and it's about supportive housing for our most vulnerable individuals.

I've met so many people who, once they've been given the opportunities to improve their lives, have done it and have established a whole new life.

I think of Jayson Chambers, who I met a few months ago. Jayson is a former resident of Tacoma's Stability Site, where one big tent shelters smaller, individual tents in the Dome District. This temporary sheltering approach serves as a transitional step from experiencing homelessness to getting into a more permanent housing solution.

Jayson was one of the first folks there when it opened. He told me something pretty profound: the Stability Site helped save his life.

The resources there helped him work through a chemical dependency problem and get an apartment. When I met him, he was checking in on other residents at the site and is using his experience to help others. I thank Jayson for being here today.

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Now I know our patience and compassion for this topic can become strained. But we cannot grow cynical or discouraged.

The immediate need for many on the streets is a safe place to lay their head while they work to improve their lives. Our goal is to reduce by half the number of people living outdoors in the next two years.

This should not come at the expense of building more affordable housing. Some of you may have a different goal on this. And some may want to fund it a different way.

I look forward to talking with you about that. But I can't imagine there is anyone here today who doesn't believe we need to act — and act now — to help the most vulnerable in Washington.

I will gauge our success not on where the money comes from, but how many people we can move to safe housing.

We know we need to create navigation centers, temporary shelters and necessary support services to successfully move thousands of people out of dangerous, unhealthy campsites.

We can house homeless youth through programs like Anchor Community Initiative, envisioned by homeless youth advocate Jim Theofelis.

I thank Trudi for her work on this with Jim and for all she does for Washingtonians.

And while we implement this new sheltering plan, we will insist on tracking progress with strong accountability and transparency measures to know we're delivering results. We're going to make sure this works.

My plan will require financial participation from cities and counties but gives them flexibility to create local solutions to boost shelter capacity.

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We can help these individuals if we provide a more stable path to housing.

I know this is a big challenge. But we don't shy away from those.

Let's bring Washingtonians in from the cold.

There's another big step we can take this year: establishing a clean fuel standard.

We know the science — and our love for our state — require us to do more to fight climate change. We've done much. You can rightfully be proud for passing some of the best clean energy laws in the United States.

But for those who doubt that we need to do more, look at Australia today. That is all of our futures — not just Australia's.

I was moved by a recent story and photograph of a small child who received Australia's highest honor on behalf of his father who died battling these devastating fires. Something spoke to the grandfather in me about this boy who represents why we're here today and what we need to do. We don't want such a devastating personal loss to become more common as the ravages of climate change rise each year.

The science has shown we have to act more quickly and with greater commitment. That's why we need to fight for all our children's future. This will take many tools and hard efforts.

Because, unless we act, here's the truth we have to face: Even with the tremendous work we've done together, we will still fall 30 percent short of our 2035 statutory requirement if we don't continue our clean transportation efforts. While we've made progress, we still haven't addressed the nearly half of our emissions that comes from the transportation sector. This is a huge hole in our efforts.

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There is an extremely effective tool available to us to reduce transportation emissions, and that's the clean fuel standard.

We need what the rest of the West Coast has already built: a clean fuel standard that calls upon the oil and gas industry to give Washington consumers cleaner fuels.

That standard has been in place for years in every other state and province on the West Coast, with little impact on fuel costs and significant impact on carbon emissions.

Now, there's good news here. We already have a lot of the cleanest transportation fuel you can find. We have some of the cleanest electricity in the country from our renewable energy, including hydropower and wind, which is fueling our electric transportation.

We are also creating clean biofuels. Klickitat County PUD implemented an advanced cryogenic nitrogen removal system that allows it to scrub methane from the landfill in Roosevelt. Methane that otherwise pollutes the planet is then put into a pipeline and shipped to California where it replaces dirty and dangerous diesel in trucks.

This Eastern Washington enterprise created jobs in a small town using the best of innovative Washington thinking. That's from one small PUD. Think about what the impact could be across our entire state.

Right now, the clean fuel generated in Roosevelt doesn't stay in Washington. It goes to California instead of to our drivers because California has a clean fuel standard.

We need to tackle this challenge with the same gusto and belief in inevitable success that have powered our previous triumphs.

It can be done. Let's do right by those who have the honor to call themselves Washingtonians in the coming decades.

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We know this: Washington state is not a state of climate denial. It is a state of climate science acceptance. For those who say we shouldn't take action, I say climate inaction is just as deadly as climate denial.

It is time to pass a Washington law, for Washington jobs, Washington drivers and Washington children — and bring this success home.

These aren't our only tasks this year. We also need to:

- Make sure more children get early learning opportunities
- Address diversity and equity, especially in the workplace
- Pass common-sense gun safety measures
- Continue to make investments in K-12, including special education
- Protect our kids from tobacco and vaping, and
- Help foster care children earlier and more frequently and provide them with more beds.

And we need to accelerate our efforts to recover salmon and save the Southern Resident orca. We stand together with tribal governments who inspire us with their stewardship.

The good news is we can do this. We can because we are the state that embraces the biggest ideas and tries new things.

Our ambitions can sound daunting. But we know the path to get there.

We've made something that is indisputable.

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We've made something that's inspiring.

We've created a spark that ignites our innovation, our collaboration, our communities, our partnerships and the big ideas we fit into this state.

We experience the best of Washington when we come together.

And one of our own soccer players knows this well. She stands for strength, spirit and the best of who we are — of course I'm talking about Megan Rapinoe.

I was inspired by what she said in her speech at the World Cup victory parade.

She said, "This is my charge to everyone here ... Every single person who agrees and doesn't agree ... It's our responsibility to make this world a better place."

I couldn't say it any better.

Let's get to work.

Thank you.

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