

Hello,

Thanks for your participation in the 6 week long Economic Inequality group put on by the Social Action Ministry at Shoreline UU Church. Personally, your response in interest, reading, attendance and discussion went way beyond my expectations. In another e-mail, I will offer you a way to submit your comments (reviews / recommendations / warnings) on the series.

For now, however, I want to send out the ideas for action that we came up with during the last session. In some cases, I add to the general actions we noted some specific actions (mainly phone calls or e-mails on bills in the WA Legislature right now, easily sent to your state legislators or the governor by calling 1-800-562-6000 and giving the operator your address with your message). I will also list some of the more effective progressive organizations, both national and local, working on economic inequality. If you feel something important has been missed, please let me know.

ACTIONS TO TAKE (Some WA Legislative Bills cited may be dead for this session, but equivalent legislation will likely be introduced in subsequent years):

TAX POLICY:

Support enactment of WA State Capital Gains Tax (HB 1484 and House Budget in current session of State Legislature).

WA State Income Tax - Initiative expected in 2016 (idea of a card - business card size - responses to common objections). Use state income tax to reduce sales tax.

Also replace the B&O tax on total receipts or revenue with **a corporate profits tax** (profits of business partnerships, LLCs, and sole proprietorships would be taxed by a personal income tax).

Fund the WA state Earned Income Tax Credit, which is on the books but has never been funded by our lawmakers.

Sunsets (expiration dates) and accountability for all special business tax breaks -- state -- and national. Currently proposed WA legislation, HB 1239 and SB 5492, would mandate inclusion of the cost of lost revenue in any future tax break or loophole legislation.

Support a Financial Transaction tax (partly a revenue issue, but mainly for its moderating effect on reckless, often computer-driven, mass financial market transactions).

Make mortgage interest deductions on tax returns only allowable for only one residence.

Provide a property tax "circuit breaker" credit for low-income non-elderly taxpayers in WA.

Raise the Estate or Inheritance tax rates at higher estate values -- both WA and national. ("Death Tax" -- what better time to be taxed on your total wealth than after you are dead!)

Disallow the corporate tax deductibility of the portions of corporate executives' compensation over 25 times the employee pay (question of average, median, or lowest employee pay not addressed).

WORKER AND CONSUMER RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS:

Work to raise local, state, and national minimum wages to make them living wages (HB 1355 and SB 5285 in current session of WA Legislature).

Work to repeal anti-union laws and to strengthen abilities of unions to organize. Need especially to give the NLRB real teeth and faster action on business firings of workers organizing for a union. Pass card check method of qualifying for union representation. Pass strong laws against our huge wage theft problems, with heavy penalties and liens against employer property for claims for unpaid wages. Work for passage now or later re-introduction and passage of a number of bills in the 2015 session of the WA Legislature that got stalled in the State Senate (HB1006 and SB5568 - Triple Damage for Wage Theft, HB 1518 and HB 5567 - Wage liens against businesses for unpaid wages, SB 5566 and SB 1519 - Prohibits misclassification of employees as independent contractors, with civil penalties and damages, SB 5569 and HB 1354 - Enforcement and penalties for employer retaliation against employees who complain about minimum wage violations). Keep WA laws against predatory lending and work for stronger laws against predatory lending across USA (Oppose WA House **Bill** 1922 and **Senate Bill** 5899). Pass a stronger Homestead exemption for consumer / homeowner bankruptcy in WA.

PROTECT OUR COMMONWEALTH:

Since Gov. Inslee's Carbon Pollution cap and trade bill seems dead in Legislature, support carbonWA.org Carbon Tax Initiative expected to be started soon. (This is a tax but primary purpose in likely revenue-neutral initiative will be reduction of CO2 emissions.)

Funding K-12 education in WA in accordance with McCleary decision by Supreme Court and make sure funding is equitably distributed to all districts.

Fund higher education in WA. GOP proposal for cutting tuition and tying it in future to resident wages is interesting, but tie it to median (not average) wage.

Work toward universal pre-school. City of Seattle has pilot program passed and planned, but this should be extended and funding figured out.

Support green building development.

Affordable housing in King and Snohomish Counties (Seattle Mayor Murray's Affordable Housing Task Force should have a plan for Seattle soon.)

Rent control?

Housing trusts?

More and higher subsidies for low-income housing.

Incentives for developers to develop more low income housing in any project -- but need careful planning and strict accountability.

Reduce subsidies and favorable tax treatment for construction and purchase/rental of luxury housing.

Impact and linkage fees on development?

Protect the social welfare safety net.

Transportation infrastructure?

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS:

Gather signatures for new WA amend state initiative I-735, to advance toward a US Constitutional Amendment to reverse the unequal and corrupting effects of the Supreme Court decisions in Citizens United, McCutcheon, Arizona.

Public financing of election campaigns, regulation should be aimed at representing the variety of political viewpoints and not at unlimited quantity of any particular viewpoint/party/candidate for healthy democratic process and self-government

Voter Rights (at state, local, and national levels):

No poll tax or equivalent in voter i.d. requirements

If particular kind of voter i.d. is required, the states must provide these quickly, easily, and at no cost to voters

Mail-in voting as in WA and OR throughout the country

Support replacement of at-large with district offices to increase minority political opportunities (current WA Voter Rights Act HB 1745 and SB5668)

Anti-gerrymandering (as in WA Voter Rights Act HB1745 and SB5668)

Election Day as a holiday -- or requiring all employers to offer half-day off for employees to vote (not too relevant in WA with mail-in ballots)

Mandatory voting by citizens (as in Australia)?

Congressional and electoral apportionment by number of voters (average for elections for national office in preceding decade?) rather than population would result in states encouraging rather than suppressing voting -- in order to retain congressional and electoral college seats?

EFFECTIVE NON-PARTISAN PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS TO USE, TO JOIN AND TO SUPPORT:

UU AND OTHER FAITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

Your church's social justice group (whatever it is called) to work on economic equality issues with people you know.

Northwest UU Justice Network or NWuuJN (<http://www.nwuujn.org>) -- on-line network for WA and OR UUs working to build a more just and sustainable world.

WA UU Voices for Justice (<http://uuvoiceswa.nationbuilder.com>) -- the UU organization for influencing WA State Legislature for UU Values.

Faith Action Network or FAN (<http://fanwa.org>) -- a WA state wide interfaith advocacy 501(c)(3) organization.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee or UUSC (<http://www.uusc.org>) -- one of its 3 main current priorities is Workers' Rights.

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community or UUJEC (<http://uujec.com>) -- main UU organization focusing on reducing economic inequality.

WA STATE AND LOCAL PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON ECONOMIC EQUALITY AND OUR COMMONWEALTH:

Washington State Budget and Policy Center (<http://budgetandpolicy.org>) -- a progressive think tank not to be confused with the regressive Washington Policy Center Washinton United for Fair Revenue (fairwarevenue.org)
Tax Sanity (<http://www.taxsanity.org>)
Washington CAN (<http://washingtoncan.org>), Wash. state affiliate of USAction (<http://usaction.org>) and also of Americans for Tax Fairness (<http://www.americansfortaxfairness.org>)
Poverty Action Network (<https://www.povertyaction.org>). See especially its analyses of state budget proposals (https://www.povertyaction.org/subdirectspan/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015-Biennial-Budget-Comparison_Gov-House-Senate.pdf)
Progressive Majority (<http://progressivemajoritywa.org>) - prioritizing the recruitment and development of progressive candidates from key communities underrepresented in public life at the state and local level.
Climate Solutions (<http://www.climatesolutions.org>)
Earth Share of Washington (<http://www.esw.org>)
Environmental Priorities Coalition (<http://environmentalpriorities.org>) , a network of 20 WA environmental groups to influence WA state policy
Futurewise (<http://futurewise.org>)
Sierra Club, WA Chapter, Environmental Justice Committee (<http://www.sierraclub.org/washington/environmental-justice-committee>), addressing a club weakness.
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Washington State Council (<http://www.seiu.org>)
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle (<http://www.urbanleague.org>)
Washington Federation of State Employees (www.wfse.org)
Washington State Labor Council (www.wslc.org)
Compass Housing Alliance (<http://www.compasshousingalliance.org>)
Downtown Emergency Services Center or DESC (<http://www.desc.org>)
Food Lifeline (<https://foodlifeline.org>)
Hopelink (<http://www.hope-link.org>)
Low Income Housing Institute (<http://www.lihi.org>)
Northwest Harvest (<http://www.northwestharvest.org>)
Plymouth Housing Group (<https://www.plymouthhousing.org>)
Solid Ground (<http://www.solid-ground.org>)

NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON ECONOMIC EQUALITY:

Economic Policy Institute (<http://www.epi.org>), a non-profit, nonpartisan think tank created to include the needs of low and middle income workers in economic policy discussions.
Institute for Policy Studies and its inequality.org project. Much of the material for this study / action series comes from inequality.org.
Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (<http://www.itep.org>) -- extremely informative factual details on national and state tax policies.
Citizens for Tax Justice (<http://ctj.org>) -- a 501(c)(4) public interest research and advocacy organization focusing on federal, state and local tax policies and their

impact upon our nation. CTJ's mission is to give ordinary people a greater voice in the development of tax laws.

Roosevelt Institute (<http://www.rooseveltinstitute.org>), working for a new deal for the 21st century

USAction (<http://usaction.org>)

--

Bob Beekman

Chair, Social Action Ministry

Shoreline UU Church

home: (206) 527-7340

cell: (206) 437-1298