

# How to Communicate with Lawmakers

- 1. Build Relationships with Legislators during Interim.** Do not wait until legislative session to engage your legislators. Legislative session is breakneck pace; during session, legislators can have twenty meetings with interest groups every single day and meetings are fifteen minutes max (often walking alongside or outside of Chamber doors). In-district interim meetings are more relaxed, with more time and legislator are more focused. Here are some ways to build relationships with legislators during interim:
  - ✓ **Invite legislators to your events and attend theirs.** Chapter meetings, community picnics, townhalls, campaign and civic events, precinct and county party meetings, etc.
  - ✓ **Sign up for their newsletters (often e-newsletters) and stay connected on social media.**
  - ✓ **Stay in contact throughout the year:** Send them articles that are relevant to the issues, keep those event invitations coming, show up to their events (campaign events or town halls).
- 2. Prepare for the Meeting and Know your Audience.** Decide what you want from the meeting. Learn about the legislator – how have they voted on the issues you care about? Identify what committees/positions the legislator serves on. Read their biography. What does the legislator care about? Frame the problem and solution using messaging that resonates with the values of the legislator. It is always worth your time to practice what you are going to say. Roleplaying can be helpful. Anticipate questions that you might be asked.
- 3. Decide who's Speaking.** If more than one person, pick a spokesperson or divide up the issues ahead of time.
- 4. Take a Deep Breath and Relax.** Your number one goal is to make a personal connection with the legislator. Go into the meeting with the mindset that you and the legislator are on the same team and want the same outcome.
- 5. Introduce and Thank.** Everyone should introduce themselves briefly, include where you live (all politics is local) and your service. Gratitude goes a long way: find something to thank the legislator for – have they cosponsor legislation? Make a great floor speech? Come to a chapter meeting or other event? Recognizing the legislator's work shows that they are seen and appreciated and helps keep them invested in doing more.
- 6. Get to the Point.** Tell the legislator why you are there to see them. Refer to specific legislation when possible. Be sure your message is short and concise. Most meetings with legislators during the legislative session are short – anywhere from 2 minutes to fifteen minutes. Sometime legislators misdirect or steer the conversation in a different direction. Stick to your key messaging and bring it back to your main points.
- 7. Illustrate the Problem and/or Solution by using a Personal Story.** Personalizing the issue changes hearts and minds, not technical policy jargon. Describe how you/others are struggling: How have

you been burdened by lack of a COLA and increased health care premiums? How does this issue effect you and the people you care about?

8. **Talk About What you Know—Defer if you Don't Know.** If you get asked a question you don't know the answer to, don't guess. Tell them you'll get back to them, and then follow up.
9. **Close the Deal – Make an Ask.** Ask for a specific commitment. Don't just ask for support. If you want the legislator to vote for a particular bill, ask them "can we count on your vote for/against this bill (in committee/on the floor)?" Get a firm yes or no answer.
10. **Inquire and Listen.** You want to learn what is important to the legislator, how they make decisions, and what questions they have. It helps you build a relationship, and it helps you be a more effective advocate. You can conclude the conversation by asking "what can I do to help you with this issue?" Be nimble and conversational.
11. **Leave Information and Follow Up.** It's good to leave a fact sheet on your issue, legislative agenda, or other background information. Be sure that it has your organizational contact information. Give this information *at the end of the meeting* so the legislator will focus on you and not get distracted by reading while talking with you. Send an email or a note thanking them for the meeting, restating your message, and provide electronic copies of priority information. It's OK to ask: *how should I follow up with you? What should be our next steps?*
12. **Get to Know the Legislative Assistant.** If the legislator is not available, it's useful to meet with the legislative assistant (LA) as a backup. LA's often convey your message to the legislator. LA's are gatekeepers, building a positive relationship with LA's can help gain access to the legislator.
13. **Record Notes Immediately.** Take notes immediately following the meeting while the information is fresh in your mind.

### Staying on Message

When we talk to someone we want to influence, especially a legislator, we know what we want to say, but we're often thrown off of our own message by a question, misdirection, odd comment, or nerves. Use this simple technique to stay on message: **Acknowledge, Redirect, and Return**

**Acknowledge:** It's important to be polite, so the first step in returning to YOUR message is to acknowledge what has been said. For example, "It sounds like you feel strongly about the importance of reforming government to maximize efficiency."

**Redirect:** And while that may not be what you want to talk about, you want the other person to have a way to get the information they've asked about, so you can redirect them. For example, "I agree we should explore all avenues to ensure our communities are being served."

**Return:** Now you've easily tucked away the other topic, and can return to the meeting topic. For example, "And the reason I'm here to talk to you today is to restore the PEBB Medicare subsidy and include a 3% COLA in your budget." You can then turn back to your personal story or to a talking point describing why this is important to you or your community.



# 2018 Primary Election Results Overview

## Major “Blue Wave” for Democrats in Washington State August Primary Election.

### Congressional:

- CD 8: In the open seat formerly held by Republican Dave Reichert, Democrats won over 50% of the votes, with Kim Schrier (18.73%) to face off against Republican Dino Rossi (43.12%)
- CD 5: Republican incumbent and number four in congressional leadership Cathy McMorris Rogers (49.29%) is facing a tough challenge against Democrat Lisa Brown (45.36%).

### State Legislative:

Not a single Democrat incumbent trailed a Republican challenger.

**There are 17 seats currently held by Republicans in which Democrats led in the primary, including 14 House seats and 3 Senate seats. In total, there are 20-23 seats currently held by Republicans that are “in play” for Democrats (17-19 House and 3-4 Senate; the lower number is within two percentage points, higher number is within five percentage points).**

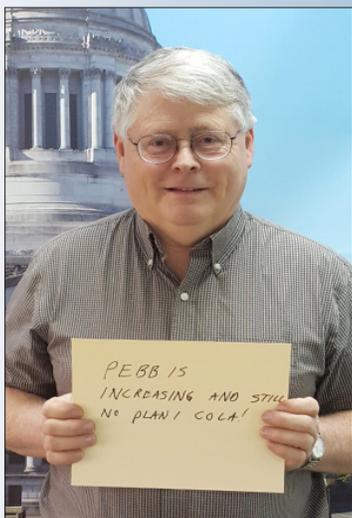
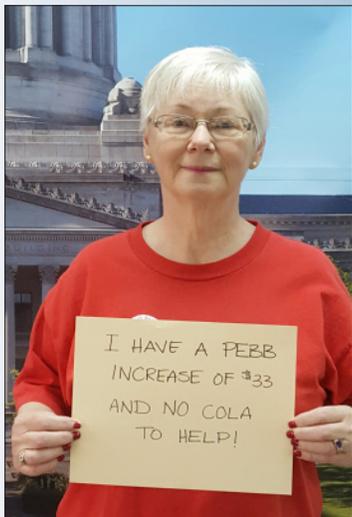
Swing districts currently held by Democrats also did better than expected with comfortable leads for incumbents Brian Blake in LD 19 (58.31%), Mike Chapman (60.21%) and Steve Tharinger (58.80) in LD 24, Christine Kilduff (58.63%) in LD 28, Kristine Reeves (62.87%) and Mike Pellicciotti (58.95%) in LD 30, Steve Hobbs (55.12%) and John Lovick (57.19%) in LD 44, Manka Dhingra (63.74%) in LD 45, Pat Sullivan (58.23%) in LD 47 and Patty Kuderer (60.08%) in LD 48. Democratic turnout is typically higher in the General election, which suggests these trends will hold.

Other highlights include:

- **5 LD (East King County):** Democrats are winning both position in their swing district: Democrat Bill Ramos (54.04%) against Republican Chad Magendanz (45.96%) and Democrat Lisa Callan (53.34%) against Republican Incumbent Paul Graves (45.17%).
- **6 LD (West Spokane):** Democrat Kay Murano (49.74%) is within one point of Republican incumbent Mike Volz; in the open house seat vacated by a Republican, Democratic candidates won over 50% of the vote; in the open Senate seat (vacated by Michael Baumgartner) Democrat Jessa Lewis (47.78%) is mounting a challenge to former house Republican Jeff Holy (52.22%).
- **10 LD (Whidbey Island):** Democrats won the majority of votes in both house seats against Republican incumbents including Democrat Scott McMullen (50.65%) leading Norma Smith (49.35%) and Democrat Dave Paul (52.86%) leading Dave Hayes (47.14%).
- **17 LD (Clark County):** Republican Incumbent Vicki Kraft (49.17%) faces a tough challenge from Democrat Tanisha Harris (43.51%, with 7.32% going to the other Democrat candidate).
- **18 LD (Clark County):** Democrat Kathy Gillespie (52.12%) is leading for the open seat being vacated by Republican Liz Pike.
- **19 LD (Southwest WA):** Democrat Erin Frasier (49.81%) is within one point of Republican Incumbent Jim Walsh (50.19%)
- **25 LD (Puyallup):** neither of the two open seats vacated by Republicans have a majority of Republican votes; in the Position 1 four-way primary Democrats took 52.14% with Jamie Smith



# Retired Public Employees Council PEBB Medicare Benefit Fact



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## FACTS

- The subsidy for Medicare eligible retirees who have health insurance through the Public Employee Benefit Board (PEBB) / Health Care Authority originated in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.
- The federal law required that the state provide a subsidy for those who qualify and receives federal funds to offset part of the cost of the subsidy.
- The Medicare subsidy for retirees covered by PEBB was cut from \$182.50 to \$150 in 2011 when the state was dealing with significant financial hardship due to the recession.

## RETIREE IMPACT

- The cost to a Medicare eligible retiree in 2010 for health insurance under the Uniform Medical Plan (which covers almost 60% of retirees) went from \$162.86 in 2010 to \$333.64 in 2018.
- **In 2018, the Legislature increased the benefit to \$168 per month, but that is NOT enough.**

## REQUEST

- ▶ **Retirees would like an increase in the PEBB Medicare benefit.**

***Retirees deserve to have dignity in retirement.***

# Retired Public Employees Council Plan 1 COLA Fact Sheet



## THE NEED FOR A COLA - LELAND NELSON'S STORY

*"I worked for the City of Everett for 31 years. My monthly pension payment is \$1500. Since the Legislature took away our COLAs, we have been in constant difficulty to keep our home. Everything we pay for to maintain the home is increasing, except our income. I am a retired public employee struggling to keep my head above water."*

Leland Nelson - RPEC Chapter 8 member, Sedro-Woolley area

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- From 1970-1986, the Washington legislature employed various ad-hoc COLAs (3%-6%) to address concerns about the adequacy of benefits and the impact of inflation.
- In 1995, the Legislature enacted the Uniform Cost of Living Adjustment (UCOLA).
- In 2011, the Legislature repealed the UCOLA.
- In 2018, the Legislature provided a one-time, 1.5% Cost of Living Adjustment, but it is NOT enough.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Without a COLA, **retirees have no way to keep up** as the price of insurance, property taxes, groceries and medicine goes up every year. Retirees are having to choose between food and healthcare.
- The State Actuary found that **if someone had retired in 1980, they have lost over 30% of their purchasing power.**
- **Overall prices (Seattle Consumer Price Index) reports inflation of 15.2% from 2010 to 2018.**
- Health care premiums for the Uniform Medical Plan went from \$162.86 in 2010 to \$333.64 in 2018 (60% of retirees are covered under this plan).

## REQUEST

► **Please support a COLA for Plan 1 retirees.**

*Plan 1 members deserve to have dignity in retirement.*

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