



United Ways of Washington

“Put simply, to move forward as a nation, we must put our children first. This means taking a fresh look at our priorities and ensuring that all children have quality health care, an excellent education and the necessary services to help lift them out of poverty. It means acknowledging that the economic slowdown profoundly affects children, and offering solutions... It means raising awareness of children’s issues and sending a message that our economic future depends on our commitment to investing in our children.” Ret. General Colin Powell, November 20, 2008.

2009 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The United Ways of Washington (UWWA) is the statewide association of Washington’s 27 local United Ways. Given that education, income and health are the building blocks for a good life, the United Ways of Washington’s 2009 legislative priorities focus on these areas.

EDUCATION: CONTINUE STRENGTHENING OF WASHINGTON’S EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM

Issue: Early childhood education is a foundation for strong schools and a strong economy. Quality early learning opportunities prepare tomorrow’s workforce for global competition, while ensuring that the children of today’s workers enter school ready to succeed. Early learning opportunities are critical to economic development and support school success. Statewide, United Ways invest over \$7.5 million in early learning.

Position: Support restoration of funding in the following areas:

1. **Home Visiting.** Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers and research shows that home visiting programs provide parents with the support they need to get their children ready for school. The current \$3.5 million investment supports voluntary services for 800 at-risk families per year in Washington.

**Restore \$3.5 million for home visiting administered through the Council
for Children and Families.**

2. **Professional Development.** Strengthening early learning providers’ access to professional development opportunities and support now will create an even stronger network of early learning opportunities for parents and children in future. This includes developing the capacity of the thousands of child care providers across the state who help young learners prepare for kindergarten.

- a. **Restore \$4 million in state funding for basic child care resource and referral services.**
- b. **Restore \$2 million for programs to support family, friend and neighbor caregivers, the care of choice for a majority of our state's infants and toddlers.**
- c. **Support the \$1 million included in the Governor's budget to continue the scaled-back Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).**

HEALTH: COVER ALL KIDS ACT/APPLE HEALTH

Issue: The United Ways of Washington supports full implementation of Washington's Cover All Kids law, enacted by Senate Bill 5093 in 2007 which sought to provide coverage for all uninsured children in our state by 2010.

Support funding to fully implement the Cover All Kids Act and extend coverage for uninsured children between 250-300% of the federal poverty level.

ACCESS TO SERVICES: 211

Issue: 211 is a simple-to-remember phone number that connects people who need help with health and human services information and resources in their local communities. United Ways provide significant financial support for the 211 system with contributions exceeding \$1 million a year.

Washington State's 211 information and referral call system can and has played a critical role in connecting people in need of services to the appropriate service providers. Operated by six regional call centers, 211 is an **integrated system** that began providing service **statewide** in January 2007. Over the past year, the WIN 211 system has seen a 20% increase in call volume, largely due to increased needs resulting from the economic downturn. The Governor's budget includes \$1 million in biennial funding.

Support \$3 million in biennial funding to sustain 211 services statewide and support increasing call volumes.

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