

Quaker Voice *on Washington Public Policy*

www.quakervoicewa.org

PO Box 452, Olympia WA 98507-0452

December 2022

Dear Friends,

While some Washingtonians are decking their halls with boughs of holly, the state legislature is decking its with new committees, new committee chairs, new members, and new bills. For this past year's accomplishments see our [2022 Legislative Report](#). Please join us in ringing in the 2023 legislative year with your time, attention, and donations.

First, we want to share with you our plans for the 105-day legislative session that begins in January. At the Annual Meeting on December 3, each of our three working groups selected focus issue areas for the coming session.

Environmental Stewardship will continue to advocate for the **Right to Repair**, in a bill that would let independent repair shops fix our electronics, creating employment, lowering costs, and reducing waste. We are up against some very big businesses in this effort, but the bill's champions are addressing the challenges creatively. That group will also watch for action that could **reduce deforestation** by delinking school funding from forestry revenues. And they will be prepared to **protect the authority of the new Environmental Justice Council**, watching for any moves that might undermine it or the other clean energy and transportation goals of the **Climate Commitment Act**.

Economic Justice will be focusing on housing justice, the mental health workforce, and a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot. **Housing justice** will get increased attention from the legislature, as both House and Senate have set up stand-alone Housing Committees. We will be studying the many bills that are expected to flow through those committees, looking for ones to support that provide the most affordable housing options for renters, better access to home ownership, and more options close to public transportation. The proposed **Guaranteed Basic Income** pilot will scale up testing the benefits of discretionary funding for families in need, so that they can use the funds for what they need most, rather than mandated items like hot meals or diapers. Quaker Voice has supported this concept in the past and will continue to advocate actively for the state-wide pilot.

Both Criminal Justice and Economic Justice are taking up issues around mental health. The Criminal Justice group is studying the emerging option of **non-police response to mental health crises** and watching for legislation that would encourage communities to provide help, not handcuffs. An obstacle to expanding such programs statewide is the **shortage of mental and behavioral health professionals** – a topic the Economic Justice group addressed last year in its priorities and will continue to put in its short list this year.

There are also not enough facilities to meet the need, and these groups will be monitoring the capital budget for proposals for state investment in this area.

The *Criminal Justice* working group will continue to seek opportunities in **sentencing reform**. In Washington, people are put into and kept in prison for too long, much longer than in other countries. Quaker Voice will be following bills that reduce sentence enhancements, give judges more discretion over length of sentences (with measures to prevent discrimination), and permit sentence review for people who have been in prison 15 or more years. **Solitary confinement** will also receive priority from this group, building on recent narrowing of the reasons for using it and making conditions more humane when it is used for the protection of the incarcerated person.

Each of the groups has other areas it is monitoring, including for example, restorative justice and gun violence. Watch the working group sections of quakervoicewa.org for updates from the groups. Our goal is always to find the best opportunities to move legislation forward that puts our testimonies into action.

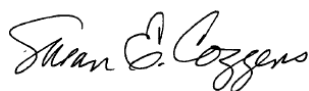
In that effort, our Legislative Advocate provides crucial expertise. The main item in the Quaker Voice budget is the cost of our contract with the Advocate. She regularly meets with each working group, creates connections to key legislators, briefs the clerks weekly during the session, and gives very specific advice on who to contact and when in the progress of bills during the session. Your donations allow us to access her expertise and increase your effectiveness in raising our Quaker voice all year long.

We invite you, in this holiday season,

- to start getting to know your new legislators and to greet and thank your current ones for what they have already done to answer that of God in each person (identify them at leg.wa.gov);
- sign up for emails from Quaker Voice and from your choice of working groups through the links on quakervoicewa.org and put info@quakervoicewa.org in your safe sender email list so that you receive our Action Alerts; and
- put Monday, February 20, on your calendar for Quaker Lobby Day and watch for further information on whether its format is in-person, online, or hybrid – we don't know yet which it will be.

Your support and faithfulness are vital to this work. Thank you so much for your past donations of time, talent and money. Be assured every penny you send helps raise our collective Quaker Voices as we uphold economic justice, criminal justice reform, and environmental stewardship in the state of Washington.

Best wishes,



Susan Cozzens, Clerk



Terry Thorsos, Finance and Fundraising

P.S. Make a donation [here](#) to support Quaker Voice.