



# Quaker Voice

*on Washington Public Policy*

www.quakervoicewa.org

PO Box 452, Olympia WA 98507-0452

## Legislative Report 2018

**We especially celebrate the passage in 2018 of not one, but two, criminal justice bills we have worked on for 12 and 14 years respectively: An Independent Corrections Ombuds and reform of Legal Financial Obligations for persons released from prison.**

by Noah Martin, Legislative Advocate  
with the Quaker Voice Board

### Summary of Action on Bills:

| Working Group                     | Issue   | House Bill # | Senate Bill #    | Status   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------|--|
| Criminal Justice                  | LFO Reform  | HB 1783      |                  | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
|                                   | Independent Corrections Ombuds                            | HB 1889      |                  | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
|                                   | Abolition of the Death Penalty                            | HB 1935      | SB 5354          | Passed the Senate<br>Died in the House Rules Committee |
|                                   | Ban the Box   | HB 1298      |                  | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
|                                   | Banning Bump Stocks                                       |              | SB 5992          | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
| Environmental Stewardship & Peace | Capital, Transportation, & Supplemental Operating Budgets | Budget       | Budget           | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
|                                   | Oil Spill Prevention Act                                  |              | 2SSB 6269        | <b>Signed by the Governor</b>                          |
|                                   | Price on Carbon   | HB 1646      | SB 6023, 5509    | In budget discussions, died in policy committee        |
| Economic Justice                  | Restore TANF Funding                                      | Budget       | Budget           | <b>6% increase in the supplemental budget</b>          |
|                                   | TANF Asset Limits   | HB 1831      | SB 5609          | <b>HB 1831 signed by the Governor</b>                  |
|                                   | HEN/ABD Funding   | Budget       | Budget           | No budget changes                                      |
|                                   | HEN/ABD Eligibility                                       | HB 2667      | SB 6502, SB 6116 | <b>HB 2667 signed by the Governor</b>                  |
|                                   | Capital Gains Tax   | HB 2967      |                  | In budget discussions, died in policy committee.       |

LFO—Legal Financial Obligations  
TANF—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

HEN—Housing & Essential Needs  
ABD—Aged, Blind or Disabled



*Quaker Voice Clerk, Susan Campbell (front row in green top), joined Interfaith Leaders for their annual meeting with Governor Inslee organized by Faith Action Network. Among other legislative issues they discussed supplemental budget requests for TANF, housing bills, carbon pricing, and racial justice bills. Susan spoke supporting an independent corrections ombuds that was established by law later in the session.*

## Criminal Justice

### ***LFO Reform***

Friends initiated efforts to reform Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs) nearly 15 years ago. The passage of **HB 1783** will eliminate for persons released from prison the interest (previously 12%) charged on all non-restitution LFOs going forward, will require that courts not impose LFO costs on a defendant who is indigent at the time of sentencing, and will place restitution at the front of the line in receiving funds that are collected. These reforms will reduce one barrier persons released from prison face in their attempts to rehabilitate their lives and focus on supporting themselves with a job and getting housing, and hence enhance public safety. The governor has signed an amended version of last year's House bill. The bill maintains the same interest rate on restitution portions of fines, and there will be attempts in the future to bring that more in line with expectations to repay victims for their costs and duress, but at a more reasonable rate of interest.

### ***Independent Corrections Ombuds***

Following more than a decade of efforts by Quaker Voice and its allies, the independent ombuds bill HB 1889 passed both houses and was signed by the Governor. The ombuds, to be housed in the governor's office, will provide the opportunity for professionals independent of the Department of Corrections to visit prisons, to learn both formally and informally about grievances and concerns of those in prison, attempt to resolve them, and bring conditions to light when appropriate. Such efforts should not only help persons in prison and their families but also help to reduce tensions with staff and the expense of legal disputes. Passage of the ombuds bill is especially satisfying because work to create this position began with Friends in 2006 and this year Quaker Voice played a leadership role in the broad coalition for the ombuds effort.

***Abolition of the Death Penalty***

After passing the Senate on a close and dramatic vote, abolition of the death penalty was not brought to a vote in the House. But passage in one house this year offers a firm foundation for consideration next year. The successful enactment of the ombuds and LFO bills after so many years demonstrates that persistence pays off!

***Ban the Box***

"**Ban the Box**," describes legislation to prohibit questions about a job applicant's criminal history on initial application forms (as in a check-box for previous convictions). The legislation enacted this session provides applicants a more even playing field for consideration for a job at this first critical stage, giving them a fairer shot at employment upon re-entry.

***Banning Bump-Stocks***

While this was not a main focus of the Criminal Justice working group, we supported several bills to restrict the sale of guns in Washington state based on our testimony of peace. The passage of legislation to **prohibit bump-stocks** on firearms was one small, but significant, step in protecting the public from improper use of firearms.



**Environmental Stewardship & Peace**

***Capital Budget***

The capital budget was an important priority of the Environmental Stewardship & Peace working group, with essential funding for winter weatherization programs for low income residents. It became law early in January.

***Price on Carbon***

As in last session we expected many legislators to prefer an initiative rather than imposing this tax themselves. Although carbon pricing bills made little headway in committees, toward the end of the session there was discussion about a possible deal to preempt the initiative effort. This fell several votes short in the Senate. So, the most viable path for this policy continues to be initiative I-1631, which Quaker Voice has endorsed.

***Oil Spill Prevention Act***

This legislation implements much-needed updates to our state code regulating the transit of petroleum to ensure a higher standard of safety. It also fully funds the Department of Ecology's

oil spill prevention program. While this bill died in committee last year, this year's version received overwhelming support in both chambers and has been signed by the Governor. To ensure this level of funding in the 2019 biennial budget efforts must continue, but this success represents a significant win for the environment and for disaster preparedness in our state.

### ***Budget Support for Climate Change Issues***

The legislature incorporated several climate investments in the various budgets. The **supplemental operating budget** contains funding for grants to school districts to support professional learning in the Next Generation Science Standards (including climate change literacy) and Department of Ecology participation in the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification. The **capital budget** includes support for natural resource priorities, including reducing flood risks and helping safeguard reliable water supplies. The **transportation budget** included funds to analyze the state of electrically powered aircraft for commercial air travel in Washington State, to study opportunities to facilitate low-income utilization of electric vehicles, and to convert three ferry vessels to hybrid electric propulsion. The Governor signed all three budget bills.

## **Economic Justice**

### ***Restore TANF***

This session achieved some modest victories for our goals around Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), that provides grants to lower-income families to address their basic needs. The 2018 supplemental budget increased funding for TANF by about 6%, mostly to help pay for **HB 1831**. This bill raises the asset limit eligibility requirement for households applying to state assistance programs such as TANF. Now, households will be able to hold \$6,000 in savings and own a car valued up to \$10,000, allowing individuals to obtain temporary financial assistance before they lose even assets for emergencies and to keep transportation that may be needed for employment.

### ***HEN/ABD***

Potential recipients of HEN/ABD benefited from the passage of HB 1831 raising asset limits. However, this session also saw the passage of **HB 2667**, which removes barriers to the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) rental assistance program that currently prevent homeless seniors and people with permanent disabilities from accessing housing assistance. It will also restore access to housing assistance for people who are homeless and who are participating in treatment for a substance use disorder, who are currently excluded from eligibility.

### ***Capital Gains Tax***

A tax on capital gains would help slow the increasing burden for our schools, infrastructure, and human services on the people who can least afford sales and property taxes. **HB 2967** proposed a 7% tax on selling, exchanging, or receiving long-term capital assets. It provided exemptions for all capital gains under \$25,000 (\$50,000 for people filing joint returns), residential dwellings, savings (college/retirement) accounts, and small farmers and family-owned businesses. Because of these exemptions, it has been estimated that this bill would impact less than 2% of the wealthiest Washingtonians. While it continued to be a topic of discussion through the end of session, there was not enough support in either chamber to pass the bill. This continues to be an essential policy to ensure our other priorities are fully funded in a fair way, and we are hopeful that more members of the legislature will come to understand this as well.