

putting
PEOPLE
first

2020

**MESSAGING
GUIDE**

peoplefirstwa.org

2020 OVERVIEW

What does it mean to put people first? When writing laws, it means centering the details of your policy around the people who would be most affected. And making the case for these policies means lifting up the stories of those everyday Washingtonians whose lives will be forever changed as a result of your work.

Stories matter because they are how we make sense of the world. They help us frame who is good, who is bad, the path towards redemption, which values are the most important, and our shared vision of the future. When repeated from one person to the next, stories shape the public narrative, create an emotional response, and help solidify our beliefs about people and systems.

At the core of the Putting People First story is the fundamental struggle of our democracy: the power of money versus the power of participation. Our story expresses our belief that the power of participation will prevail, and if we come together across racial differences—as we have done in our past—we can do great things. Our heroes are ordinary Washingtonians who are fighting for a better world, and their tools are the policies we must pass to get there. The villains in this story oppose our values and seek to destroy democracy, using weapons like preemption policies and corporate tax breaks to actively block progress. It is our job in the progressive movement to tell compelling and complete stories; if we don't, our opposition will do it for us.

This guide is built with the Heroes' Narrative framework and uses the Race-Class Narrative—a national messaging research project by the thinktank Demos—which proves that when we talk about race, we win. In this guide you will find storytelling and narrative guidance, proven messages, and most importantly, a story that we can all tell, together. Uniting our stories and language will give us the tools we need to truly put people first.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide the progressive movement—legislators, legislative staff, and advocacy organizations—a narrative framework to tell compelling stories in support of the Putting People First Agenda in 2020.

In this guide you'll find:

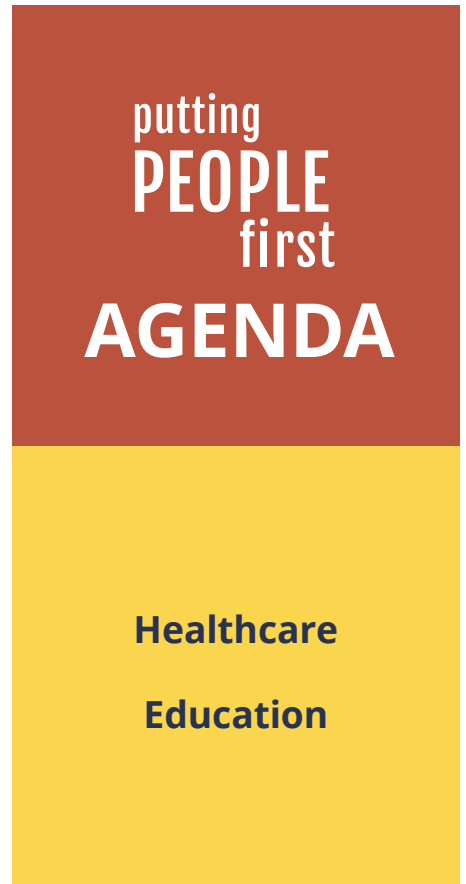
- Putting People First Agenda
- Communications Strategies for 2020
- Putting People First Core Narrative
- Core Narrative by Issue Area

People deserve quality, affordable healthcare. Every year, Washingtonians are paying more for and getting less from their healthcare. Because health insurance and prescription drug companies put profits over people, we live in a state where your race, income, and gender dictate the quality of care you receive. That's not okay. Everyone, no matter our differences, deserves affordable, quality healthcare. We can put people first and protect patients in Washington by:

- Ensuring healthcare providers are not prevented from providing information and resources that are in the best interest of their patients
- Hold prescription drug companies accountable for raising prices on the life-saving drugs patients need
- Expand Apple Health coverage to include people up to age 26
- Boost access to high-quality, affordable, and preventative dental care through the expansion of dental therapy programs

People deserve great schools. All students—whether Black, brown, or white—deserve a world class learning experience, and our state's 70,000 educators agree. We've made progress in recent years but there is still work to do to ensure all students in Washington—regardless of their race, zip code, or income level—have equitable learning opportunities.

- Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion resources for community and technical colleges
- Require comprehensive sexual health education in all school districts, ensuring vital information on consent and healthy relationships



putting
PEOPLE
first
AGENDA

Economic Justice

People deserve a prosperous economy that includes every Washingtonian. Our tax code is the most upside-down in the nation, and the cost of living keeps increasing. Powerful special interests and the greedy few have rigged our tax code in their favor with wasteful tax breaks and loopholes that line their pockets and rob our state of the resources we need for all of us to thrive. Working people are barely able to keep up, yet those of us with moderate incomes pay a share of up to six times more of our income in taxes than the wealthiest in Washington. And while working people, whether Black, brown, or white, are hurt by our tax code, its effect is especially harmful for low-income communities of color because it compounds decades of unjust economic policy, upholds racist systems, and does not reflect modern economic realities. It doesn't have to be this way. If we balance the tax code so that the wealthy few and big corporations pay their share, we can invest in the foundations that lift everyone, like great schools, public spaces, modern infrastructure, and transportation options. We can start rebalancing our tax code by:

- Ensuring the ultra-wealthy pay their share through a state capital gains tax on profits from the sale of high-end stocks, bonds, and other financial assets
- Closing unnecessary, wasteful, and outdated tax loopholes for large corporations who should be investing in their communities
- Funding and modernizing the Working Families Tax Credit, which puts cash back in the pockets of people who work hard for low wages, including immigrants, college students, and caregivers to young children and people with disabilities

People deserve to live in safe and thriving communities.

Washington is a great place to live because of the strong, welcoming communities we build together. But powerful special interests who rig the rules for themselves have undermined our ability to safeguard our neighbors. In recent years, we've faced challenges like rising homelessness due to a lack of affordable housing, the loss of innocent lives from preventable gun violence, and the visible suffering of our neighbors due to a shortage of mental and behavioral health services. Our opponents divide us against one another by pointing the finger at individuals and vilifying our Black, immigrant, and Muslim neighbors, but we know better. Putting people first means investing in our communities so that they are affordable, accessible, safe, and healthy.

- Create more affordable homes in every community by increasing our investment in the Washington Housing Trust Fund
- Remove exclusionary zoning laws that ban modest, affordable home options in our neighborhoods, push prices up, and perpetuate discrimination based on race and class
- Increase tenant protections so that renters can stay in their homes and their communities
- Pass common sense fixes to the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (*TANF*) program that prioritize family stability and success
- Support adults with disabilities by investing in the Housing & Essential Needs (*HEN*) and Aged, Blind, or Disabled (*ABD*) programs

People deserve clean air and clean water. From worsening pollution to fiercer forest fires and more frequent floods, climate change affects all of us in our communities. The effects are especially bad for low-income communities of color, who are most frequently on the front lines of climate disasters. Corporate polluters have been making a mess in our state for years and are not following the same rules as the rest of us. They have left us to deal with the consequences from the impact on our health to harmful disruptions in our daily lives. It's past time for a change. We must cut global warming pollution and prepare our communities for the threats a rapidly changing climate poses to our state.

- Establish a clean fuel standard that requires oil companies to reduce pollution from transportation fuel, provide more local jobs, and cleaner choices for how we get around.
- Make sure our waterways are healthy so aquatic ecosystems, including resident orcas and salmon, have enough food, are more resilient, and are protected from toxic chemicals.
- Ensure new and existing buildings reduce climate pollution and are healthy places to live, work, and learn

putting **PEOPLE** first **AGENDA**

Thriving Communities

Environment

putting PEOPLE first

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES FOR 2020

Below are eight proven communications strategies that will help you talk about the Putting People First agenda in a way that is relevant and authentic to you and your audience:

1 Discuss race overtly using the Race-Class Narrative. Our opposition consistently uses racism as a tool to divide us; we must name it, point to unity around racial and economic justice, and provide reasons for us to come together across racial differences as we have done in the past. Our audience, which includes many people of color, is deeply concerned about racism. Failing to address racial concerns directly leaves our audience feeling unmotivated and unwilling to support policy and advocacy efforts.

2 Tell stories. People want to see themselves reflected in policies and institutions, but wonky bill language turns most people off. Humanize your legislation by telling personal stories, drawn from your own experience or the experiences of others, to illustrate how problems can be solved through government.

3 Paint an aspirational vision. People know there are big problems in the world, and they are hungry for something positive to believe in. When talking about policies, begin by painting a picture of what our communities will look like once your policy is in effect. Elevate the conversation above the fray of the day-to-day news cycle and help people see how the result of your policy will benefit us all.

4 Center working people and middle-class families. Everyday people, Black, brown, or white, want to band together to fight back against wealthy and powerful special interests. A truly progressive vision can channel that frustration into support for policy goals across the state that secure prosperity for all, not just the powerful few who are rigging the rules to benefit themselves.

5 Lead with values. A binder full of policy proposals and 100-point plans are effective governance, but they don't make for effective communications tools. Before you get to the solution, tell people why you care and what kind of community you'd like to see. If you don't name your shared values, you'll lose the people who aren't tracking bills on a daily basis—which is nearly all your audience.

6 Repeat yourself often. Narrative only works if it is repeated across messengers and mediums over and over again. Repetition is crucial. It is how narrative frameworks become the foundation of the stories told in newspapers, in community centers, and around the kitchen table.

7 Use just one fact. And only if you absolutely have to. Countless social and neurological studies show that people aren't convinced by a battery of facts; instead they seek out facts that support their biases. Good persuasion uses values to frame an argument and humanizing stories to drive home the point. Research shows that a fact only sticks when framed in a shared value.

8 Know your audience. Great messaging relies on strictly targeted audiences. The messaging in this document is broad and should be tailored by you to speak to the hearts, minds, and core values of your audience. Whether you are an advocacy organization or an elected official, you are the expert on your own audience.

CORE NARRATIVE

The Core Narrative is the three-part central story from which all other narrative elements are derived. Each of the five policy areas from the Putting People First agenda contain stories—both yours and your constituents'. As you'll discover, various narrative elements (i.e. heroes, tools, weapons) will change with the policy context. However, the central quest, threat, and solution will align with our Core Narrative below.

1 Quest: Washington is one of the best places in the country to live, work, and raise a family. We believe that with innovation and hard work we can achieve prosperity for all, regardless of our differences. We must fulfill that promise by ensuring everyone—whether Black, brown, or white—has a shot at entering and staying in the middle class, and that every community in our state can thrive and be healthy.

2 Threat: For too long, our state's progress has been held hostage by powerful special interests who seek to divide us against each other by race, religion, gender, and income. Our opponents point the finger at people experiencing homelessness, new immigrants, and people in need of mental health treatment for our hard times. People of all backgrounds suffer when our state's investments in the foundations of thriving communities—like healthcare, affordable housing, education, and safe infrastructure—are weakened by the greedy few who are rigging the rules to benefit themselves.

3 Solution: We've proven that when we come together, as we've done in our past, we can fight for—and win—a future that works for people from all walks of life. Together, we've ensured that all people, regardless of immigration status, have access to healthcare. We passed the most progressive paid family leave policy in the nation. And we're leading on environmental justice by ensuring cleaner air in our communities, cleaner waterways, and protecting our resident orcas. Washington can be a state where everyone shares in the prosperity of our region and lives in a thriving community. No exceptions. That's why we're putting people first. We're working to make sure that in our state we have an economy where people from all races and all walks of life have the opportunity to succeed, where communities thrive and families are healthy, and where government prioritizes the well-being of all people, not just the wealthy few.

CORE NARRATIVE BY ISSUE AREA

The following table contains grab-and-go style bullet points that allow you to build an argument for your issue area using the Heroes' Narrative and the Race-Class Narrative. These are not bullet points that are meant to stand alone; string them together to help tell the complete story of a specific policy area. It's important to use all the elements of the Heroes' Narrative—quest, threat, hero, villain, tools, and weapons—to build a convincing narrative that moves all your audiences, whether they are reporters, lawmakers, or advocates. You'll notice that several issue areas have bullet points in common; this illustrates the intersectionality across issue areas.

Before you employ these elements, note the importance of using consistent talking points that reinforce the overall narrative. When asked a question by a reporter about why you're championing a policy, decide in advance if you want to lead with values or your heroes. When discussing the problem you're seeking to solve, decide if you're leading with the overall threat, or the villain and their weapons. Your decisions will depend largely on context, and you can use the following as a guide:

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS	HEALTHCARE	EDUCATION
<p>Values are your most persuasive message. They allow ordinary people to see themselves in you and your beliefs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordability Accessibility Working together Cultural competency Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity Equity Learning Accessibility Cultural Competency
<p>Quests matter most. They are the long-term vision that the agenda is driving towards.</p>	<p>All of us—Black, brown, and white—receive the high-quality care we need to be healthy, with providers who speak our language</p>	<p>All students, regardless of race or income level, can access a world-class public education</p>
<p>Threats urge people into action. They are the crisis villains pose.</p>	<p>This is an issue of life or death. Washingtonians either pay too much for bad healthcare coverage or they can't afford to see the doctor and get medicines when they're sick</p>	<p>Too many students are denied opportunity because of inequitable investments in our public schools</p>
<p>Villains stand in the way of progress and must be named. Be as specific as possible, and always link them with their weapon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insurance companies Big pharma Greedy, irresponsible CEOs Free market extremists Big money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerful special interests who rig the rules for themselves Anti-union extremists Private school profiteers
<p>Weapons should always be paired with a villain – this is how we frame their actions and policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hit consumers with inflated billing and pricing Prioritize profits over the health of everyday Washingtonians Block access to necessary care Deny critical reproductive care Deny care based gender identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit opportunity by neighborhood Cut or deny funding for programs that address barriers to opportunity Serve only the wealthiest zip codes and students The “self-made” or “boot straps” narrative
<p>Heroes are the real people at the heart of our story and should be real people from your advocacy movement or your district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families stretched to the breaking point by rising healthcare costs Women and nonbinary people who can't get healthcare when they need it Patients who need mental and behavioral health services Medical and mental health service providers: doctors, nurses, home-care providers Patients whose first language in not English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students of all ages: preschool to college Teachers and other public school staff Parents and caregivers who want all students to access opportunity
<p>Tools translate policies into values-based outcomes. Each of these messages matches a priority outlined in the Putting People First agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring healthcare providers are not prevented from providing information and resources that are in the best interest of their patients Hold prescription drug companies accountable for raising prices on the life-saving drugs patients need Expand Apple Health coverage to include people up to age 26 Boost access to high-quality, affordable, and preventative dental care through the expansion of dental therapy programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion resources for community and technical colleges Require comprehensive sexual health education in all school districts, ensuring vital information on consent and healthy relationships

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS	ECONOMIC JUSTICE	THRIVING COMMUNITIES
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Innovation • Opportunity • Shared Responsibility • Economic security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability • Safety • Community • Working together • Shared Responsibility
Quests	A prosperous economy that works for every Washingtonian, not just the wealthy few	Every Washingtonian lives in a community that is safe, healthy, and affordable
Threats	There's more wealth in Washington than ever before, but working people struggle to afford the basics and lawmakers aren't adequately investing in the things that help everyone thrive	Greedy special interests starve our communities of resources and force families to fend for themselves, undermining our ability to safeguard our neighbors
Villains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful special interests who rig the rules for themselves • Corporations that don't pay their taxes or treat their workers fairly • Free market extremists • Big money • Irresponsible CEOs • The greedy few 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful special interests who rig the rules for themselves • NRA and gun lobby • Corporate debt collectors • Greedy developers and landlords • Anti-immigration extremists and bigots
Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rig the tax code to benefit themselves • Strip unions and workers of their rights • Pull every lever of power to protect profits over people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrupt our political systems with big money • Create and maintain cycles of poverty for profit • Spread nativist lies and fake news • Actively block progress to benefit themselves
Heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday Washingtonians • Working and middle-class families and individuals • Young people establishing careers • Single parents • Small businesses who care about their workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday people wanting to live in safe, healthy, affordable communities • Young people • Working people and families • Immigrants that helped build and strengthen our communities
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the ultra-wealthy pay their share through a state capital gains tax on profits from the sale of high-end stocks, bonds, and other financial assets • Closing unnecessary, wasteful, and outdated tax loopholes for large corporations who should be investing in their communities • Funding and modernizing the Working Families Tax Credit, which puts cash back in the pockets of people who work hard for low wages, including immigrants, college students, and caregivers to young children and people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more affordable homes in every community by increasing our investment in the Washington Housing Trust Fund • Remove exclusionary zoning laws that ban modest, affordable home options in our neighborhoods, push prices up, and perpetuate discrimination based on race and class • Increase tenant protections so that renters can stay in their homes and their communities • Pass common sense fixes to the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that prioritize family stability and success • Support adults with disabilities by investing in the Housing & Essential Needs (HEN) and Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) programs

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Leadership • Accountability • Shared Responsibility
Quests	A Washington state with healthy families, clean air, clean water, and available clean energy jobs
Threats	Pollution harms the health, vitality, and economic strength of our communities
Villains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large corporate polluters • Powerful special interests who rig the rules for themselves • Anti-public transit extremists
Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit by making a mess of our air, water, and land • Stall the transition to clean energy to increase short-term profits • Undermine trust in our institutions • Manipulate the tax code to benefit the wealthy and powerful
Heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday Washingtonians • Communities of color • Indigenous tribes • Low-income communities most impacted by pollution • Children exposed to pollution that leads to chronic illness • Young people fighting for their future • Farmers, ranchers, fisher-people doing their part the protect the air, water, and land they rely on for their livelihood • Working people with clean energy jobs • Businesses that are leading the way by going green
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a clean fuel standard that requires oil companies to reduce pollution from transportation fuel, provide more local jobs, and cleaner choices for how we get around. • Make sure our waterways are healthy so aquatic ecosystems, including resident orcas and salmon, have enough food, are more resilient, and are protected from toxic chemicals • Ensure new and existing buildings reduce climate pollution and are healthy places to live, work, and learn