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## **Facing Race: 2012 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity Executive Summary**

Race matters in Washington. People of color represent nearly 30 percent of Washington residents, and the population of people of color is growing. Equal opportunity and racial equity are more crucial to our collective well-being than ever before.

On all measures of equity, whether it is health, wealth, education or political representation, wide gaps persist between communities of color and white communities. These disparities are not merely vestiges of historical inequality that will diminish over time. On the contrary, many of the gaps are widening, such as the wealth gap between African Americans and whites that has quadrupled since the mid-1980s.

*Facing Race* grades the Washington Legislature during the 2011 and 2012 regular sessions on issues that affect racial and economic equity. While the bills included in the report affect all Washingtonians, they have a particular impact on disparities between white residents and African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Arab Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

Each of the 25 bills included in this report card met at least one of six criteria:

- Does the legislation explicitly address racial outcomes and work to eliminate racial inequities?
- Will the legislation increase access to public benefits and institutions for communities of color?
- Does the legislation advance enfranchisement and full civic participation for everyone in the state?
- Will the legislation protect against racial violence, racial profiling, and discrimination?
- Is the legislation enforceable? Are adequately funded mechanisms in place to ensure accountability?
- Will the legislation exacerbate existing racial inequities, or have unintended consequences on communities of color?

### **Report Findings**

- 1) **Racial inequities are largely a result of policy decisions** that are made every year by policymakers on issues such as education, housing, taxation, health care, civil rights, and tribal sovereignty.
- 2) **The Legislature overall earned a D** for its votes on bills that advanced racial equity.

<b>SENATE GRADE</b>	<b>HOUSE GRADE</b>	<b>COMBINED LEGISLATURE GRADE</b>
61%	66%	63%

- 3) **Many legislators are not making the grade.** Sixty legislators (40 Representatives and 20 Senators), or 41 percent of the Legislature, received failing grades. Nineteen legislators who received failing grades live in a district with over 30 percent constituents of color.

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**4) Six Representatives received A's** for their efforts to advance racial equity. They include:

- Billig (3<sup>rd</sup> District)
- Cody (34<sup>th</sup> District)
- Hansen (23<sup>rd</sup> District)
- Kenney (46<sup>th</sup> District) – highest grade in the House and the Legislature (100 percent)
- Lias (21<sup>st</sup> District)
- Pollet (46<sup>th</sup> District)

**5) Just one Senator received an A.** Senator Kohl-Welles (36<sup>th</sup> District) received the only A, with a 90 percent score. Only five other Senators received an 85 percent or better - Frockt (46<sup>th</sup> District), Harper (38<sup>th</sup> District), Murray (43<sup>rd</sup> District), Prentice (11<sup>th</sup> District), and Regala (27<sup>th</sup> District).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The 51 organizations endorsing this report are calling on legislators to do the right thing and support legislation that advances racial and economic equity in Washington.

The report includes missed opportunities – policies that advance racial equity, but never received a vote in the Legislature. These bills would lessen disparities in health care, education, criminal justice, voting rights, and employment:

- Implementing the Medicaid Expansion and the Basic Health Option through health care reform
- Expanding access to dental care
- The Washington Voting Rights Act
- Abolishing the death penalty
- Broadening access to early learning
- Prohibiting mandatory e-verify
- Ensuring workforce stability & safety

These missed opportunities offer a path forward for the Legislature in 2013.

Finally, to advance racial and economic equity, it is critical that the Legislature raise new revenue and ensure that everyone pays their fair share. Legislators must address our state's regressive tax structure, in which low income residents pay a disproportionate share of state taxes. Raising new revenue from corporations and our state's wealthiest residents will bring equity to the system and enable the state to maintain investments in health care, education and other programs that are proven to provide opportunity and create prosperity for all Washingtonians.

### **Endorsing organizations include:**

Allyship, American Friends Service Committee, Arab American Community Coalition, Children's Alliance, El Centro de La Raza, Entre Hermanos, Got Green?, Para Los Ninos, Latinos for Community Transformation, Faith Action Network, Minority Executive Directors Coalition, Seattle King County NAACP, National Association of Social Workers - Washington Chapter, Washington State National Organization for Women (NOW), Alliance for a Just Society, OneAmerica Votes, People's Institute Northwest, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), Parents Organizing for Welfare & Economic Rights (POWER), Real Change, Seattle Office of Civil Rights, Race and Social Justice Initiative, Senior Services, Skagit Immigrant Rights Council, Statewide Poverty Action Network, UFCW Local 21, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, Washington State Labor Council, WFSE/AFSCME Council 28, Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, SEIU Healthcare 775NW, Washington Christian Leadership Coalition (WCLC), United Black Clergy of Washington, Greater Mt. Baker Church, The Lands Council, Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Community Building Foundation, APICAT for Healthy Communities, Center for Multicultural Health, Asian Pacific Americans for Civic Empowerment (APACE), WIN/WIN Coalition, Seattle Human Rights Commission, SEIU 1199NW, Tacoma NAACP, Washington Defender Association, Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, M.E.Ch.A. of Eastern Washington University, Casa Latina, Seattle Indian Health Board, UAW Local 4121