



A Seattle Progressive Tax Campaign

Washington State Income Tax History

- ❖ Washington is one of only seven states with no tax on income of any kind. We also have the #1 most regressive tax system in the nation.
- ❖ During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Washington voters approved an income tax. The State Supreme Court struck it down, arguing that income is a form of property and therefore subject to Washington State's "uniformity clause", which mandates that all taxes on property be applied uniformly — an unrealistic proposition for an income tax.
- ❖ Based on legal decisions in other states since then, there is a good chance that ruling would be reversed today. But for this to happen, someone first has to pass an income tax, it has to be challenged, and that challenge has to wind up in the State Supreme Court.
- ❖ In 2010, Washington Income Tax Initiative 1098 was defeated statewide. However, it won strong majority support in progressive cities like Seattle.

A Local Strategy

- ❖ For the past few years, the Seattle-based Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) has been working on a local strategy. After all, it is far easier to pass a local ordinance than a statewide law.
- ❖ A first try at this local strategy was made last year in the City of Olympia. The Opportunity for Olympia Initiative, which would have taxed income over \$200K to fund community college tuition assistance, received 48% support in the Nov. 2016 election. This was despite skewed voter turnout from the presidential election & opposition from the mayor and city council.
- ❖ With Trump in the White House, we have both a need and an opportunity to go on the offensive. A 1.5% tax on income in excess of \$200K in Seattle would generate around \$175 million per year for housing, transit, education, health care, green jobs — as well as giving other cities the same funding tool and paving the way for a statewide effort.



Ordinance Passes



Local Authority?



Constitutionality of Income Tax