



## ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY  
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WASHINGTON STATE LABOR  
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WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON STATE NURSES  
ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON STATE PUBLIC  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION

WITHINREACH

February 14, 2012

The Honorable Lisa Brown, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Mike Hewitt, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Ed Murray, Chair, Senate Ways & Means Committee  
The Honorable Joe Zarelli, Ranking Member, Senate Ways & Means Committee

The Honorable Frank Chopp, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Pat Sullivan, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Richard DeBoldt, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Ross Hunter, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee  
The Honorable Gary Alexander, Ranking Member, House Ways & Means Committee

Dear Senate Majority/Minority Leaders, Mr. Speaker, House Majority/Minority Leaders, Ways & Means Chairs and Ranking Members:

**We are writing regarding critical state support for Washington's 35 local public health jurisdictions.**

As you proceed with the difficult task of drafting the supplemental budget, we are gravely concerned with any efforts to eliminate state funding for core public health services and shifting funding responsibility to the counties. We are strongly opposed to this idea.

Over the last decade, state funding for local public health has not kept pace with inflation nor population growth, and, in fact, one of those funds has taken a 50 percent reduction in the last two years. Additionally, categorical funding has been reduced. Any further reduction is simply not sustainable without serious consequences for the residents in our state.

**Diseases do not respect county borders.** Statewide collaboration on disease outbreaks is critical and fundamental to the work of public health. Recent outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) or last week's intestinal illness outbreak at the cheerleading camp in Snohomish County, which has sickened more than 200 people, underscore the critical importance of having both a strong State Department of Health and functional local health departments to address and contain outbreaks. Maintaining core funding for critical activities such as communicable disease, chronic disease and immunizations is vitally important to the health of everyone in Washington state.

**Funding public health is a shared responsibility.** Simply passing down local taxing authority is not the answer. In many counties, the population and economic base is insufficient to replace lost state dollars. The result is a greatly reduced capacity at our state's local health departments; many of which are down to a handful of staff and some dangerously close to ceasing operations altogether.

**Every Washingtonian has the right to expect a strong network of local public health departments and public health services.** As our state continues to focus on economic recovery and improving education, having an effective public health infrastructure is essential to increasing productivity with a healthy workforce and to ensuring our children are ready to learn.

Sincerely,

Anne Tan Piazza  
Co-Chair  
Public Health Roundtable

Dennis Worsham  
Co-Chair  
Public Health Roundtable