

# Cool Schools Washington

Healthy Kids, Better Schools, Jobs, and Reduced Climate Impact



A bill to retrofit school buildings and put energy savings toward education—passed the legislature (EHB 2561) and now is on its way to the people for a vote. The November election gives Washington voters the chance to vote for investments in local schools, healthy kids, jobs, and smart energy savings—it's a win, win, win, win for Washington.

## Healthy Kids

Making local school buildings healthy places for our kids makes sense because we know that children are more susceptible to pollutants in indoor air.<sup>1</sup> Carnegie Mellon University reviewed more than a dozen studies on the impact of indoor air quality on health and found that improved indoor air quality reduced the incidence of the flu by 51 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The referendum will provide the resources for local school districts to improve indoor air quality, temperature, and lighting, which can prevent illness and reduce absenteeism.<sup>3</sup>

## Better Schools, Better Learning

Fixing school buildings can help improve students' work. A 2005 study of energy efficient schools in Washington State found a 15 percent reduction in absenteeism and a 5 percent increase in student test scores after efficiency measures were completed.<sup>4</sup> High levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air can lead to lethargy and attention problems. Tightening up older buildings will improve air flow and ensure children better learning opportunities.

## Jobs

Energy efficiency retrofits can help put the state's unemployed back to work, with job potential in a wide variety of industries including construction, energy service, and project management.<sup>5</sup> One study found that for each 1.4 percent of annual efficiency gain in buildings, the economy produced about 181,000 additional jobs.<sup>6</sup>

## Energy Savings

Local energy efficiency projects have already demonstrated success. Since 2000, energy efficiency improvements at the state's community colleges have delivered more than \$10 million dollars in energy savings—that is more than a million dollars per year at only a handful of campuses.<sup>7</sup> The referendum will provide resources to complete energy saving improvements in every corner of the state.

## Reduced Climate Impacts

Since 1986 energy efficiencies completed in Washington State through performance contracting have already prevented enough carbon emissions to equal taking 21,254 cars off the road or about 160,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>8</sup> The projection is that once schools are fully participating in the program supported by the referendum, reduced energy consumption will prevent enough carbon emissions to equal taking about 130,000 cars off the road.<sup>9</sup>

## Answers About the Yes! On Schools and Jobs Referendum

### Will the referendum make improvements to my kids' school?

Upon passage of the referendum, improvements to school buildings will happen all over the state, in school districts large and small. Whether your local school gets improved will depend on whether your school district applies for the funding that is available.

### Is this a tax increase?

No. If the referendum passes, sales tax on bottled water will be extended beyond 2013. Voting for the referendum doesn't create any new taxes.

### What kinds of improvements will the referendum fund? Will we get new school buildings?

New funding will be available to improve existing school buildings, making them safer and more energy efficient and extending their life. The buildings that get improved will last longer, saving the state and local school districts money.

### If I vote for this, how will it help my child do better in school?

The air we breathe is important to our health and our ability to learn and perform well at our jobs. The same is true of students in our public schools. One of the most immediate effects of many of the projects funded would be improved air quality. Healthier learning environments mean better learning and better performance on school work and tests.

### How much will this referendum cost me?

The referendum doesn't create any new taxes or fees but extends the existing tax on bottled water. The funding will come from money borrowed by the state and the state will pay back the money over time. The state is obligated to pay back the money to the general fund.

### What kinds of jobs will this referendum create?

The jobs created by the referendum will look a lot like construction jobs. The work will involve fixings roofs, putting in insulation, replacing heating and cooling equipment, and conducting audits and energy evaluations of school buildings.

1. Paladino and Company, "Washington High Performance School Buildings: Report to the Legislature," January, 2005, [http://www.paladinoandco.com/files/PaladinoandCompany\\_WhitePaper\\_WashingtonHighPerformanceSchoolBuildings.pdf](http://www.paladinoandco.com/files/PaladinoandCompany_WhitePaper_WashingtonHighPerformanceSchoolBuildings.pdf)
2. Environmental Protection Agency and Energy Star, "Energy Efficiency and Indoor Air Quality in Schools," September, 2003, [http://www.energystar.gov/ia/business/k12\\_schools/Ee&ciaq.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/business/k12_schools/Ee&ciaq.pdf)
3. Gregory Kats, "Greening America's Schools: Costs and Benefits," United States Green Building Council, October, 2006, <http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=2908>
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5. Alan Hardcastle, PhD, "Green Jobs in Washington State: Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges," Washington State University, [http://www.energy.wsu.edu/documents/workforce/Green\\_Jobs\\_in\\_Washington\\_State\\_2010.pdf](http://www.energy.wsu.edu/documents/workforce/Green_Jobs_in_Washington_State_2010.pdf)
6. David Roland-Holst, "Energy Efficiency, Innovation, and Job Creation in California," Center for Energy, Resources, and Economic Sustainability, University of California Berkeley, October 2008, [http://are.berkeley.edu/~dwrh/CERES\\_Web/Docs/UCB%20Energy%20Innovation%20and%20Job%20Creation%2010-20-08.pdf](http://are.berkeley.edu/~dwrh/CERES_Web/Docs/UCB%20Energy%20Innovation%20and%20Job%20Creation%2010-20-08.pdf)
7. State of Washington, Department of General Administration, "Customer success spreadsheets: Total of state of Washington projects," Energy Saving Performance Contracting Program, Fall 2009, <http://www.ga.wa.gov/eas/epc/totalProject.XLS>
8. State of Washington, Department of General Administration, "Customer success spreadsheets: Total of Environmental Benefits," Energy Saving Performance Contracting Program, Fall 2009,
9. Calculated using the EPA's emissions calculator based on estimates of energy use and square footage estimates provided by McKinstry and Company.