

**Dear POWER members,**

**I have started working at the Olympia Food Cooperative and am thrilled about awesome opportunity to learn how an 85-member collective runs and bring really great food to the community in a workplace that cares deeply about social justice.**

**This means that I have much less time to spend at POWER and we need POWER members to take ownership of a piece of POWER's work! This can look like whatever will work for you. For example, Angie reliably pays the bills each month, about an hour commitment. Mischa comes in weekly for two hours and keeps the computers running smoothly and does advocacy call-backs. Jen makes sure the office is open and on Tuesdays for the Women's Economic Collaborative and Thursdays for the Member Meeting. Cristal has committed to a couple hours a week for outreach.**

**What would you like to do?**

**Join us this Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> for a POWER**

**Volunteer Orientation POWER Outage!**

**Darby's Café, 211 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in downtown Olympia**

**The fabulous Olympia Childcare Collective will provide childcare down the street at POWER, 309 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.**

**Potluck at 5:30, Orientation 6 – 8. Hope to see you there!**

**Sincerely,**

**Monica Peabody, POWER Executive Director**

**Below:**

- 1. Thurston County Section 8 Waiting List Opening from Feb. 27 to March 12**
  - 2. WA Health Care Plan extends enrollment deadlines.**
  - 3. Sign Governor Inslee's petition to increase worker's rights.**
  - 4. England has a Minister of Women and Equality and a Minister of Care and Support! Article on government decisions to improve life for caregivers.**
  - 5. Join the Children's Alliance at the Capitol to ask that food assistance be a top budget priority.**
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**2. Washington Healthplanfinder Closes with Surge in Enrollment, Announces Spring Special Enrollment Opportunity for Washingtonians to Avoid 2016 Penalty**

**\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: \*Feb. 16, 2015**

**\*Residents who were unaware of tax penalty may still have time to enroll\***

**\*OLYMPIA, Wash\*. - The Washington Health Benefit Exchange today announced that nearly 160,000 residents enrolled in a Qualified Health Plan through [\\*<www.wahealthplanfinder.org\\*>](http://www.wahealthplanfinder.org) [<http://wahealthbenefitexchange.cmail2.com/t/r-l-qjrnkk-jikrtytyuj-n/>](http://wahealthbenefitexchange.cmail2.com/t/r-l-qjrnkk-jikrtytyuj-n/) by the close of open enrollment on Feb. 15. Washington Healthplanfinder experienced significant interest over the weekend, with 40,000 unique website visits and nearly 30,000 calls to the Customer Support Center.**

**"Interest in accessing free or low-cost health insurance among Washingtonians continues to grow," said Richard Onizuka, CEO for the**

**Washington Health Benefit Exchange. "As expected, we experienced a large influx in our Qualified Health Plan enrollment during the final days of open enrollment, and more than 66,000 new customers during the entire second open enrollment period."**

**The Exchange also announced a special enrollment opportunity today for residents who were unable to complete their applications by the Feb. 15 deadline or who may become aware of the tax penalty for not having health insurance under the Affordable Care Act when they file their annual tax return this year.**

**The special enrollment period runs from Feb. 17 to April 17, 2015.**

**"This is the first year that residents may incur a tax penalty for not having health insurance under the Affordable Care Act," said Richard Onizuka, CEO for the Washington Health Benefit Exchange. "This special enrollment window will allow these individuals - as well as those who experienced difficulty completing their applications - additional time to get enrolled for 2015 coverage."**

**Those who aren't covered in 2015 will face a penalty next year through the**

**Internal Revenue Service of \$325 per individual or up to 2 percent of your income, whichever is greater. Washingtonians who would like to enroll in 2015 coverage should take the following actions by April 17, 2015:**

**· \*For Customers Who Were Unaware of the Tax Penalty: \*Complete an online application at [wahealthplanfinder.org](http://wahealthplanfinder.org). When prompted to select the type of special enrollment you are applying for, select "other." Customers will then be asked to contact the toll-free Customer Support Center to request a special enrollment at 1-855-923-4633.**

**· \*For Existing Customers with Technical Issues: \*Customers are eligible if they have already started an application and experienced barriers to enrollment and renewal due to system delays or technical defects in Washington Healthplanfinder, an inability to submit an application because their income could not be verified, or unclear instructions regarding the necessary steps for 2015 enrollment. While staff will continue to contact affected customers directly, customers can also call 1-855-923-4633 or email [customersupport@wahbexchange.org](mailto:customersupport@wahbexchange.org) to request a special enrollment or report their situation.**

**Customers must request the spring special enrollment period by 4:59 PM on April 17 and pick a Qualified Health Plan and submit a payment by 11:59 PM**

on April 17 to secure 2015 coverage. For more information about the spring special enrollment opportunity, \*please click here for detailed frequently asked questions.\*  
<<http://wahealthbenefitexchange.cmail2.com/t/r-l-qjrnkk-jikrtytyuj-s/>>

As a reminder, customers with \*standard qualifying life events\*  
<<http://wahealthbenefitexchange.cmail2.com/t/r-l-qjrnkk-jikrtytyuj-g/>>  
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such as getting married or having a baby, should complete their online application per the standard special enrollment process.

**\*Reminders:** Enrollment in Washington Healthplanfinder Business and Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) is year-round. Apple Health customers will receive a notice 60 days before the month they enrolled in or renewed their coverage last year.

**\*About Washington Healthplanfinder\***  
Washington Healthplanfinder is a new online marketplace for individuals, families and small businesses in Washington to compare and enroll in health insurance coverage and gain access to tax credits, reduced cost sharing and public programs such as Medicaid. The open enrollment period for Washington Healthplanfinder began on Nov. 15, 2014 for health coverage starting on

Jan. 1, 2015. The open enrollment period officially ended on Feb. 15, 2015.

**\*About the Washington Health Benefit Exchange\***

The Washington Health Benefit Exchange is a public-private partnership established in accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) to implement a new health insurance marketplace for individuals and small businesses. The Exchange is separate from the state and governed by an independent 11-member board. For more information, visit

\*<[www.wahbexchange.org](http://www.wahbexchange.org)>

<<http://wahealthbenefitexchange.cmail2.com/t/r-l-qjrnkk-jikrtytyuj-w/>>.

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3. Do employees in Washington deserve the right to paid sick leave?

Yes.

Do workers in Washington deserve the right to fair pay?

Yes.

Do we -- right now -- have the opportunity to lead the nation in creating an economy that works for all Washingtonians?

Yes.

**This week, the Washington state House is hearing bills on both guaranteeing paid sick leave and raising the minimum wage.**

**Workers shouldn't have to choose between their health -- and their families' health -- and putting food on the table. That's why guaranteeing that most employers provide paid sick leave is the right thing to do.**

**Raising the minimum wage is fair to workers, and it'll boost our state's economy as whole. When workers have more money to spend, local businesses across the state benefit. Raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour is not only fair -- it's smart.**

**While these two bills are being heard in the House, it's critical that we build up public support for a Washington economy that works for all. Washington is the best place in the country to live and work. Let's keep leading by supporting these two bills. Will you sign on today?**

**[Join me in supporting a Washington that works for all, and sign on in support of paid sick leave and raising the minimum wage:](#)**

[http://action.jayinslee.com/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=9917&utm\\_source=ema\\_2015-02-16\\_m&track=ema\\_2015-02-16\\_m&tag=ema\\_2015-02-16\\_m&utm\\_campaign=m&utm\\_medium=ema](http://action.jayinslee.com/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=9917&utm_source=ema_2015-02-16_m&track=ema_2015-02-16_m&tag=ema_2015-02-16_m&utm_campaign=m&utm_medium=ema)

**Along with improving our infrastructure, investing in education, and supporting an accessible healthcare system, guaranteeing paid sick leave and a fair minimum wage are essential to providing a Washington that works and provides opportunity for all.**

**Thank you for your commitment to creating a better Washington.**

**Very truly yours,**

**Jay Inslee**

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**4. [Press release: Supporting carers to stay in paid employment](#)  
*13 February, 2015***

**Ministers have launched a series of pilots exploring ways to help carers balance work with their caring responsibilities.**

**Carers could soon be using smart phones, email alerts and pop-up care centres to help them plan and co-ordinate formal and informal support. The ideas will be trialled as part of £1.6 million of pilot projects announced today by Minister for Women and Equalities,**

**Nicky Morgan, and Norman Lamb, Minister for Care and Support at the Department for Health.**

**National statistics show that there are 5.4 million carers in England and 57.7% are female. Caring responsibilities fall most heavily on women aged 50-64 and 12.1% of women work full time alongside their caring responsibilities.**

**There are more than three million people who currently have work and family caring responsibilities. Giving them support to manage caring alongside paid work would benefit them and their families and give British businesses and the UK economy potential saving of up to £1.3 billion a year.**

**The nine pilot areas will explore how technology can be combined with professional support from the Local Authority and the assistance of informal networks of friends, neighbours and Time Bank volunteers to ease the pressure of caring. For example, one pilot will monitor cared for adults by telephone every day at an agreed time, then contact the carer by email or text to confirm that they do not need assistance.**

**The pilots will also explore how businesses can give employees with caring responsibilities more help, for example by promoting flexible working patterns and setting up carers 'surgeries'. One pilot will also set up a pop up business school to help carers set up in self-employment.**

**There will be nine pilot sites across the country: North Tyneside; Northamptonshire; Cheshire West; Gateshead; Bury; North Somerset; South Gloucestershire; Staffordshire and Stoke; and Sefton.**

**Minister for Women and Equalities, Nicky Morgan, said:**

**Women often find themselves caring for both older relatives and children; juggling work and caring can be enormously stressful. These pilot projects are designed to test how that pressure can be eased and allow people to balance their caring responsibilities with their jobs and families.**

**Carers who feel forced to leave their jobs are a real loss to the workforce and economy. We want to give people the peace of mind about their loved ones that helps them keep their jobs.**

**The start of these pilots coincides with the announcement of a new pledge to support carers under the Public Health Responsibility Deal's health at work Network. The Network has broadened its existing pledge on chronic conditions to include an element that supports unpaid carers. The pledge sets out to improve the workplace support employers provide for people with long-term/chronic conditions (such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease) by asking employers to embed some basic principles for managing these conditions within their standard HR procedures. The pledge will also now aim to improve the workplace support that employers provide for carers so that they can care more effectively; look after their own health and wellbeing; fulfil their employment potential; and have a life of their own alongside their caring responsibilities.**

**Care and Support Minister, Norman Lamb, said:**

**Too many carers find it difficult to balance their important caring roles with their work commitments. This has costly implications not only for them, but for our businesses and economy too.**

**Our Care Act will provide more support to carers than ever before by working with people, their employers and communities. This project will help us to build a stronger economy and a fairer society.**

**The Government's Business Champion for Older Workers, Dr Ros Altmann, said:**

**In my role, I have heard from many carers who tell me that they want to get back into work. Employers are waking up to the energy and enthusiasm of older workers, but they sometimes need to make allowances for extra caring responsibilities they may have.**

**Those bosses who are ready to help their employees move to part-time or flexible hours are seeing their staff paying them back in spades with loyalty and by adding value to their company.**

**These pilots are an exciting step forward to give us the chance to see how we can educate employers and provide specialist support for all carers to stay in employment.**

**This support builds on the Care Act which will come into force on 1 April 2015 and puts carers on a par with the people they support with regard to their health and well-being and local councils will have a duty to meet carers' eligible needs for support.**

**It also follows other action the government has taken to ensure women are not disadvantaged in the workplace because of caring responsibilities. Shared parental leave came into effect earlier this year, and Tax Free Childcare will offer up to £2000 of support for almost 2 million families when it comes into effect next year.**

**These pilots will begin shortly and will run for 2 years.**

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**5. Hello supporters of State Food Assistance:**

**This just in! Senator Sharon Nelson has made restoring the 25% cut to State Food Assistance a top budget priority. This is great news!**

**Senator Nelson is the Senate Democratic Leader and a wonderful champion for this critical issue of equity and fairness. She represents the 34<sup>th</sup> district including parts of White Center, Burien, and Vashon Island.**

**We are making great progress – but there’s a hard road ahead as legislators craft a budget. Join us on March 4<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol in Olympia to speak up in support of State Food Assistance and keep the momentum building. RSVP to Emijah Smith, Community Organizer: [emijah@childrensalliance.org](mailto:emijah@childrensalliance.org) or call 206-324-0340 x25.**

**In the past ten days we’ve heard positive statements and commitments to restore State Food Assistance from multiple key legislators. In the picture to the right Children’s Alliance member and staff met with Representative Sullivan (47-Covington) at Have a Heart for Kids Day in Olympia. Together, we are making progress.**

**Action! Join us in at the Capitol in Olympia on Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 to 2:00!**

**We are getting close to the time in the legislative session when focus begins to shift toward budget decisions – and that means it’s time to increase our efforts! We are organizing a small delegation of parents, grandparents, and community leaders like you to visit legislators. Your voice can help build the base of support we need to win this campaign and restore a measure of fairness to everyone who counts on State Food Assistance.**

**We’ll meet together at the Capitol to prepare, visit legislators in small groups, and regroup for lunch. We can help with transportation and making legislative appointments. If you would like to join us for this day of**

**advocacy please let us know as soon as possible! Please email [emijah@childrensalliance.org](mailto:emijah@childrensalliance.org) or call 206-324-0340 x25.**

**Keep your eyes out for an online action alert in coming weeks. We hope to see you in Olympia on March 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Thank you for being part of the campaign to restore State Food Assistance.**

**Best,**

**Siobhan, Linda, Emijah and the Children's Alliance team**