

Racial Equity Team

Communities of Color Oppose Cuts to Workers' Compensation

May 21, 2011

Dear Governor Gregoire and Legislative Members,

The Racial Equity Team rejects the proposed policy changes that will undermine our injured workers' safety net. These changes will harm racial equity in our state by having a disproportionate impact on communities of color and other vulnerable communities including low-wage and older workers. We stand united in our opposition to compromise and release in any form, and we oppose the Social Security Offset proposal that would further cut the incomes of older injured workers.

Washington State's statistics on minority workers mirror national statistics – workers from communities of color are disproportionately represented among the lowest paid workers in society. Lower income injured workers will suffer most from cuts to the safety net either in the form of lump sum buyouts or the social security offset. We know from other states that the majority of injured workers who take lump sum buyouts are highly disempowered financially and educationally. For older workers who are barely making ends meet, every dollar cut from their injured worker payment means one less dollar for food, housing, medicine and heat.

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that “current statistics indicate that disparities also exist in the rates of occupational illnesses and injuries.” Workers of color are often employed in high-risk occupations, so any changes that undermine the injured worker safety net may have a disproportionate negative impact on workers of color. With high numbers of workers of color in construction, agriculture, hotel housekeeping, health care and other high risk occupations, we oppose policies that will jeopardize injured workers from communities of color by undermining their ability to get the care and support they need to get back to work.

We strongly oppose these policies that put workers of color – our employees, friends and neighbors – at risk by undermining the injured workers' safety net. We urge you to oppose compromise and release in

any form and the Social Security Offset, and instead support the alternative policies that save money and ensure Washington's injured workers get the care and protection they need.

Sincerely,

Asia Pacific Cultural Center

Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Pierce County

American Federation of Teachers Washington

Casa Latina

First Place

Filipino Community of Seattle

Islamic Civic Engagement

Kip Tokuda, former House of Representatives Member

King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Latino Community Fund

Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State

Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County

National Association of Social Workers - Washington Chapter

OneAmerica

Puget Sound Sage

SEIU Healthcare 775NW

SEIU Local 925

SEIU Healthcare 1199NW

Statewide Poverty Action Network

Washington Community Action Network

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Washington State Nurses Association