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Washington Supreme Court sides with kids and schools

In a 6-3 vote, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled today that Initiative 1053, which required a supermajority vote in the state legislature to raise revenues or close tax loopholes, is unconstitutional.

Olympia – In a 6-3 vote the Washington State Supreme Court ruled today that Initiative 1053, which required a supermajority – two-thirds -- vote in the state legislature to raise revenues or close tax loopholes, is unconstitutional.

“This ruling is a huge win for kids and schools,” said Chris Korsmo, CEO of the League of Education Voters, one of the lead plaintiffs. “Washington schools need to be fully funded in order to ensure that all kids reach their potential. This ruling, combined with the recent *McCleary* decision, will help ensure that our kids have all the resources they need to get an excellent education.”

The lawsuit to challenge the constitutionality of Initiative 1053 (Tim Eyman’s I-1053) was brought by a broad coalition that includes the League of Education Voters, Washington Education Association, parents, educators, and state legislators, including Representatives Jamie Pedersen, Laurie Jinkins, Chris Reykdal and Senator David Frockt.

“This latest Supreme Court ruling paves the way for the legislature to fully fund K-12 public schools as mandated by the Washington Constitution and the Court’s earlier *McCleary* decision. We urge the House and the Senate to increase funding for our schools so we can begin to reduce overcrowded class sizes and expand all-day kindergarten. Our students’ future depends on it,” said Mary Lindquist, President of the Washington Education Association.

The Court agreed with the plaintiffs that the Washington Constitution sets the rules for how state government works and only requires a simple majority to raise revenue or modify tax preferences.

The Court did not rule on the constitutionality of another provision of the Initiative which requires a public vote for the State to exceed the expenditure limit noting that that provision had never been invoked to limit legislative action.

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League of Education Voters is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization made up of parents, students, and leaders who believe in a quality education from cradle to career. We shape the debate, build powerful coalitions and grow the grassroots to achieve meaningful reform and ample, equitable, and sustainable resources for education. www.educationvoters.org

Washington Education Association represents nearly 82,000 K-12 teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty members in classrooms and schools across the state. www.washingtonea.org

Pacifica Law Group represented the coalition in the lawsuit. <http://www.pacificallawgroup.com>

Quotes of Support from Partners

“Across our state, hard-working families are hurting. Our legislature is grappling with how to restore investments in students, families and communities. With today’s decision behind us, the Legislature can and must return to a vibrant, open, democratic debate about how to fund our children’s education, cradle through college.”

Karen Hart, President of SEIU 925

“Local school boards struggle every day to give their kids a decent education without enough funds,” said WSSDA President Debra Long, a school director from Central Valley School District. “Kudos to all those who challenged the supermajority. The court’s ruling is an important step toward getting the needed resources to enrich the lives of our children.”

Debra Long, President, Washington State School Directors Association

“As the state superintendent, and as a former legislator, I support the Supreme Court’s decision,” said Randy Dorn, superintendent of public instruction. “Legislators are elected by the people to take tough votes. A simple majority for most votes has worked for decades. Requiring a two-thirds supermajority would ironically give excess power to a minority group because they could reject proposals on revenue increases or taxes.”

Randy Dorn, Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction

“This decision reinforces the intent of the constitution and the concept of one-person, one-vote rather than empowering a handful of votes to count more. A democracy should reflect the desire of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority, which this decision does.”

Paul Rosier, WASA Executive Director

