

Citizens for Economic Opportunity for All of Washington

The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor
State of Washington Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504
RE: Job Creation Outside of Central Puget Sound

May 29, 2013

Dear Governor Inslee:

We applaud your efforts to streamline and expedite the process for building the Boeing 777x here in Washington, which would be a wonderful outcome for your administration.

But many communities in Washington exist in the economic shadows of economic prosperity, especially the farther one gets from King County. In Whatcom County, for example, the standard of living has been declining for years with the loss of high wage industrial jobs. The county's poverty rates are higher than the state and nation, and the average wage is more than 20% below the state average. Construction employment hit its lowest point in February, with thousands of skilled workers struggling to make ends meet.

Yet Whatcom County's costs of living are close to those of Seattle. This creates an unsustainable future for too many working families, who themselves live in the economic shadows of their more prosperous neighbors. A recent regional economic study classified Whatcom County as one of 11 counties in Washington where employment growth was "slipping". Washington Regional Economic Analysis Project <http://washington.reaproject.org/>

Communities outside of the greater Seattle metropolitan area also need your help in fostering the kind of business climate that will encourage the growth of family wage jobs. But there sometimes seem to be two standards applied to such matters. When it comes to economic development in Central Puget Sound, government throws out the welcome mat, but elsewhere not so much. A second export facility in Washington state, in Longview, enters its own scoping process this summer so the state decision is being watched closely. The Millennium Bulk Terminals permits were submitted 450 days ago, yet the scoping process has not begun. Both Cowlitz and Whatcom counties would benefit greatly from the jobs and tax revenues these projects would bring.

Not all areas of the state have access to the ability to make airplanes and software. In many cases, the economies of the more rural and suburban parts of Washington are fueled by more traditional industries. And they have the right to rely upon an ability to utilize the state's port, road and rail transportation infrastructure every bit as much as the residents of the more populous counties. Services like rail transportation are not just reserved for the larger cities, only to become a potential environmental "impact" when needed to spur the economies of other regions. You have recently spoken of the need to build a transportation system for the future and a culture of innovation and exports. Ports and rail systems are essential to the accomplishment of your vision; a vision that we hope will be equitably distributed among your state's communities.

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We can't help but contrast the treatment being afforded to the 777x (which we consider to be most appropriate) with that being given to the Gateway Pacific Terminal and other port projects. These projects, which would expand maritime export capacity for U.S. producers, are the subject of an unprecedented and expanded regulatory review process. Multiple hearings across the state have been held to receive input on the scope of the EIS process, including (potentially) an examination of everything from train traffic to greenhouse gas emissions here and such emissions involved with the use of products overseas. This is uncharted territory which, if set as a precedent for state policy, could grind future port and industrial job growth to a halt. Applying such standards to Boeing's projects, for example, could result in unwanted results, including the view that Washington is not the place to do business.

If fundamental fairness matters at all in the application of government actions, then this leaves you and your administration with a practical choice: either apply the same laws and standards to all projects or apply the same laws with differential standards to different projects. Since the latter would be offensive to American standards of equity, the first choice is the obvious one.

Logically, this argues for the uniform and consistent application of reasonable and prudent standards of regulatory review. This should include a scope of review that is practical (not global) and expeditious, as well as thorough and grounded in facts and science. We ask that this approach guide your actions and those of your agencies in all parts of the state. Investment abhors regulatory uncertainty and arbitrariness. Under a system of laws, new policy surprises should not spring up with each new project or product. Environmental laws, unless specifically written otherwise, are neutral as to such matters.

We share your goal of job creation under appropriate environmental standards.

Respectfully,

Association of Washington Business
Barbara Gradl, Custom Bookkeeping Solutions, Bellingham
Blaine City Councilor Bonnie Onyon
Brad Owens, NW Washington Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, Burlington
Chris Johnson, Laborers Local 276 and Co-Chair of Northwest Jobs Alliance, Bellingham
Ferndale City Councilmember Mel Hansen
Ferndale Mayor Gary Jensen
Fluke Capital Management, John Fluke, Jr., Chairman
Gordon Jonasson, Lopez Island retired executive
Greater Spokane Incorporated, Agribusiness Council Steering Committee Jack Silzel
Herb Krohn, UTU Local 1348 President
International Trade Alliance of Spokane
Jex Biorn, Business Unit Manager at The McGregor Company
Ken Oplinger, Co-Chair NW Jobs Alliance (former CEO of Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber and Blaine City Councilmember)
Lampson International, William Lampson, President
Longview City Councilmember Michael Wallin

Lynden Mayor Scott Korthuis
McGregor Company, Alex McGregor, President
National Federation of Independent Businesses, Patrick Connor, Washington State Director
Nooksack Mayor Jim Ackerman
Randy Mullen, Owner of Mullen Farms, Pasco, WA
Spokane City Councilmember Mike Allen
Spokane City Councilmember Mike Fagan
Spokane City Councilmember Nancy McLaughlin
Spokane City Councilmember Steve Salvatori
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