

Northwest Workforce Council

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December 3, 2009

Marty Brown
Governor's Legislative Director and Interim Chair
Washington WTECB

Charlie Earl
Executive Director
Washington SBCTC

Karen Lee
Commissioner
Employment Security Dept.

Eleni Papadakis,
Executive Director
Washington WTECB

Dear Marty, Charlie, Karen and Eleni,

The Executive Committee of the Northwest Workforce Council would like to forward to each of you a letter that was sent to Governor Gregoire. The Chief local elected official for our Workforce Development Area, Ken Dahlstedt, convened the members of the four county Northwest Consortium Committee (LEOs) Tuesday of this week. A topic of consideration at that meeting was the recently released draft report of the workforce system study, (available at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/2009SystemReview.asp>).

The LEOs primary concern rose in response to the study's recommendations for substantive changes in the roles and responsibilities of both the local elected officials and the Workforce Development Councils. The record of excellence attained in the system and the threats to the roles and responsibilities of LEOS and Councils was taken quite seriously. The influence and oversight of a locally driven system, as outlined in federal legislation, was viewed by our LEOs as being moved to a single state agency, specifically the Employment Security Department. While there is always room for improvements in any system as complex as ours, there is nothing so broken that requires a level of substantial change as recommended in the draft report.

The LEOs felt equally strong in requesting more time to provide comment from the business and labor representatives on our Board. This Council wishes to express our complete agreement with our LEOs that more time than a couple of weeks is needed to provide thoughtful comment. We have attached their letter for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeff Kochman, Chair

attachment

cc: Mary Margret Haugen, Norma Smith, Barbara Bailey, Jeff Morris, Dave Quall, Kevin Ranker, Kelli Linville, Dale Brandland, Doug Ericksen, Val Stevens, Kirk Pearson, Dan Kristiansen, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Rick Larsen, WDC Chairs, WDA Chief Local Elected Officials, Don Brunell, Gay Dubigk

December 1, 2009

Governor Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire,

We write to you today with urgency. We, local elected officials, convened this morning to discuss emerging issues and developments in the four county workforce development area we represent: Skagit, Island, San Juan and Whatcom Counties. One critically important topic we discussed is the recently released draft report: *Washington's Workforce Development System: A review of critical components, as directed by Governor Gregoire*.

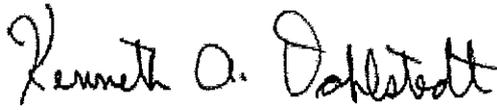
The draft report, released on the evening of November 24, 2009, closes for public comment on December 7, 2009. This brief timeframe is wholly unacceptable to thoroughly vet a report that proposes substantive changes in the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of workforce development system partners. We find it a bit disconcerting the comment period falls between the holiday season and the current county budget negotiations which occupies much of our time. We ask for a reasonable extension of the comment period to March 31, 2010 to afford a thorough review and analysis of the proposals, and implications of such, contained in the draft report.

Our initial review indicates the proposed strategies may have substantive negative impacts on the highly functioning workforce development system. We see threats within the draft report that may significantly undermine the partnerships you spoke of at the recent meeting of the Washington State Association of Counties.

Local elected officials, and the Workforce Development Councils they work in collaboration with, need time to analyze and respond. Our local communities are in a critical time of economic instability and we are reluctant to allow significant changes to a system that has effectively performed with local oversight and the important agility to respond to rapidly changing local economic and workforce impacts. It is not the time to be taking chances by making significant changes and diminishing a local system whose greatest attribute of success is local oversight and responsiveness to local economies. Equally, diminishing the voice of business and labor in a demand-driven system of workers and talent development creates significant concern.

Please extend the comment period on this draft report to March 31, 2010. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ken Dahlstedt
Commissioner
Skagit County



Helen Price Johnson
Commissioner
Island County



Bob Myhr
Council Member
San Juan County



Pete Kremen
Executive
Whatcom County

cc: Mary Margret Haugen, Norma Smith, Barbara Bailey, Jeff Morris, Dave Quall, Kevin Ranker, Kelli Linville, Dale Brandland, Doug Ericksen, Val Stevens, Kirk Pearson, Dan Kristiansen, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Rick Larsen, Jeff Kochman, Gay Dubigk