



Keep Washington Competitive Newsletter

January 2015

The start of the 2015 legislative session has been full of activity on topics of interest to our membership. Included below you'll find information and links to news on a variety of topics related to Keep Washington Competitive. You are invited to circulate this update to your membership so they can stay informed. Have a news item, event or feedback to share? Please contact us at info@keepwashingtoncompetitive.com.

Latest News from KWC

Members of *Keep Washington Competitive* responded to new taxes proposed in Gov. Jay Inslee's 2015 State of the State address. Larry Brown, a KWC board member and legislative and political director for the Aerospace Machinists Union District Lodge 751 said, "I agree with the governor that Washington state is at a crossroads and that we need policies that work for all Washingtonians. Labor needs assurance priorities in our state are in line with supporting workers as we preserve and increase the vital jobs in Washington related to exports." Read the full response [here](#).

Competitiveness

[The Seattle Times](#), [The Puget Sound Business Journal](#) and [Crosscut](#) discuss the Greater Seattle Region Global Trade & Investment Plan released at last week's Economic Forecast conference. The forum highlighted the continued importance of expanding trade and ensuring Washington continues to attract more foreign direct investment as viable economic strategies for the Greater Seattle region and the Pacific Northwest.

"We have a unique opportunity to capitalize on the increasingly globalized world economy and position Washington as a global hub of international trade and investment," said Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, in a press release announcing the plan. Read more about the original plan announcement [here](#).

Earlier in the month, the governor outlined one way to do that: by speeding up the permitting process:

"[The transportation plan] codifies a 7-step permitting process for projects requiring an environmental impact statement under NEPA, and the use of a multiagency permit program as described in HB 1978. This bill also requires the Department of Ecology to undertake rule making and convene a work group to recommend additional improvements to the permitting process. Working together, we can protect our environment while reducing the time it takes to get critical projects completed."

SEPA: Former NY Governor Discusses Harm of Lengthy Permitting Policies

Former NY Gov. George Pataki spoke at the Washington Policy Solutions Summit Jan. 7. He discussed the strategies he employed to keep businesses in New York and attracted new ones, and highlighted issues that proved hurdles to existing businesses, including over-taxation, over-regulation and lengthy permitting processes. His approach to these obstacles produced good results for New York's economy and he recommended Washington state address them in order to remain competitive.

Take Action!

Action opportunity: Let the governor know you support his plan to speed up permitting, [here](#), and that KWC will follow its progress. And let Dept. of Ecology Director Maia Bellon know you'd like information on serving on the rule-making work group, [here](#).

Harbor Maintenance Tax

Jon Talton writes in The Seattle Times that ports on the U.S. East Coast are investing money into building the "last mile" of transportation upgrades – connecting highways and railroads to ports. "Much of this is paid for with the Harbor Maintenance Tax, dinged on containers coming into the United States, including Puget Sound. It puts us at a marginal disadvantage on costs against Canadian ports. Worse, little of the money can be used for projects here. The Puget Sound ports have made a good start in meeting the challenge by agreeing to become partners in a seaport alliance. Details are expected soon." Read more [here](#).

Fish Consumption Rule

On the first day of the legislative session, Gov. Inslee released a draft rule on fish consumption. Peter Jensen writes in Washington State Wire, in part: "It could mean sweeping impacts for industries, manufacturers and municipalities throughout the state, who would have to come into compliance with more stringent rules on the chemicals they use and the wastewater they treat....Trade associations like the Association of Washington Businesses and local governments have warned of the costs of technological and equipment upgrades necessary for achieving compliance, and if there's too many hurdles on the path to meeting the standards. Brandon Houskeeper, a government affairs director with AWB, said the proposal has improved through revisions, but he feared some firms with storm water runoff permits from the Department of Ecology would still face an uphill climb to compliance." Read more [here](#), and at The [Seattle Times](#).

Governor Inslee's Transportation Plan

The Longview Daily News editorial team wrote last week that regional transportation will be one of its platform issues to receive special emphasis over the next 12 months. In enumerating specific projects, the editorial includes this statement: "Road and rail-crossing improvements to State Route 432 in Longview, something we feel ought to happen whether or not the proposed Millennium coal export terminal is ever approved and constructed." Read more [here](#).

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