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Public Disclosure Commission

**TO:** **WASHINGTON STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT FERGUSSON, PIERCE COUNTY PROSECUTOR MARK LINDQUIST, AND THE WASHINGTON STATE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

**RE:** **CITIZEN'S ACTION LETTER RE UNLAWFUL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY BY THE PORT OF TACOMA, THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY, THE TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY CHAMBER, AND THE "THIRD TRIUMVIRATE" CREATED BY THEIR CONCERTED ALLIANCE OPPOSING TACOMA CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF RCW 42.17A.555 BY THE PORT OF TACOMA IN EXPENDING PUBLIC FUNDS TO OPPOSE A BALLOT MEASURE**

**FROM:** **ARTHUR WEST  
120 State Ave. NE #1497  
Olympia, Washington, 98501**

Please consider this as a complaint for violation of RCW 42.17A.555 and a formal citizen's action letter under RCW 42.17.765 concerning the continuing unregistered campaign activity, unregistered PAC activity, and failure to report campaign related receipts and expenditures to oppose Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6 by the Port of Tacoma, the Economic Development Board of Tacoma-Pierce County, the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, and by the "Third Triumvirate" formed by the organized political alliance of these three powerful and influential organizations.

RCW 42.17A.555 provides...

No elective official nor any employee of his or her office nor any person appointed to or employed by any public office or agency may use or authorize the use of any of the facilities of a public office or agency, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition. Facilities of a public office or agency include, but are not limited to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of employees of the office or agency during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the office or agency, and clientele lists of persons served by the office or agency...

While there is an exemption in this for "normal and usual" activities of an agency, this exemption is limited in scope and strictly construed against actions of agencies such as the Port to influence legislative actions of another governmental body such as the City of Tacoma, which is what the Port is attempting to do in their present suit.

As a longstanding 1975 Opinion of the Attorney General has maintained for over 40 years now...

The possible authority of any public officer or employee to expend funds to influence legislative action by another governmental body is to be viewed with special strictness. In fact, as we have pointed out in previous opinions, the rule in this state has long been that such expenditures are contrary to public policy and illegal in the absence of express authority ...

This restriction has been most often applied to expenditures for influencing action of the state legislature. However a similar rule has been consistently applied to expenditures made by municipal corporations (such as school districts) for the purpose of influencing votes on ballot propositions. See, our opinion of January 20, 1972 [[an Informal Opinion, AIR-72598]], to Senator Rasmussen...

Finally, in determining whether an elected official is or is not in compliance with RCW 42.17.130, supra, one cannot

safely rely solely upon a determination of whether a particular act may be legal in a technical sense. The phrase "normal and regular" in the proviso thereto must be taken to denote some qualification of conduct over and above that of being merely lawful; otherwise, presumably, the proviso would have used that term. Every word and phrase of a statute must be given its full meaning, where possible, and no word or choice of wording should be regarded as insignificant. Murray v. Dept. of Labor & Industries, 151 Wash. 95, 275 Pac. 66 (1929).

Consequently, to give full effect to the proviso, the phrase must be construed to mean such activities as are not only lawful, but also to at least some extent, within the "usual" conduct of the office in question. Thus, an action by an elected official for a purpose prohibited by RCW 42.17.130 will not necessarily be saved by the proviso merely because the governing body of the agency ultimately ratified the expenditure or even gave the official in question special authority, in advance, to expend funds for the purpose in question.

In practical effect what this means is that the proviso must be strictly construed as provisos usually are. Tabb v. Funk, 170 Wash. 545, 17 P.2d 18 (1932). Generally, therefore, expenditures made in extraordinary cases, or authorized in some extraordinary manner or by some extraordinary process of reasoning, cannot be held to be "normal and regular conduct" of an office under the proviso with which [[Orig. Op. Page 9]] we are here concerned. AGO 1975, No. 23 cited in King County Council v. Public Disclosure Commission, 93 Wn.2d 559, 611 P.2d 1227, (1980), cited in Knowing the Waters, Basic Legal Guidelines for Port Districts, Robert Hauth (2007), at page 23-24.

By using public funds to oppose Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6 in an extraordinary manner that was not part of the "normal and usual" conduct of the Port of Tacoma, as these terms have been understood for over 40 years in Attorney General Opinions entitled to great weight, (See Citizens

Alliance for Property Rights Legal Fund v. San Juan County, \_\_\_ Wn.2d \_\_\_ (2015), citing Five Corners Family Farmers v. State, 173 Wn.2d 296, 308, 268 P.3d 892 (2011), the Port violated RCW 42.17A.555.

In addition, campaign and PAC reporting requirements appear to have been violated, in that PDC Interpretive letter 07-2 states...

- a person or organization may become a political committee by either (1) expecting to receive or receiving contributions, or (2) expecting to make or making expenditures to further electoral political goals.
- The organization making expenditures must have as its "primary or one of the primary purposes ... to affect, directly or indirectly, governmental decision making by supporting or opposing candidates or ballot propositions...." State v. Dan J. Evans Campaign Comm., 86 Wash.2d at 509, 546 P.2d 75 (Pages 598-599)
- An organization is a political committee if one of its primary purposes is to affect governmental decision making by supporting or opposing candidates or ballot propositions, and it makes or expects to make contributions in support of or in opposition to a candidate or ballot measure.

The recent actions, pleadings, press releases and statements of the Port of Tacoma, the Economic Development Board of Tacoma-Pierce County (EDB) and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber clearly demonstrate that (despite the legal restrictions upon the use of public funds to oppose ballot measures) one of the actual primary purposes of each of these groups individually, and as their new incarnation as a tripartite political organization with a unified political agenda, is to affect governmental decision making by opposing ballot measures such as Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6.

Attached and incorporated by reference is a copy of a lawsuit and exhibits that demonstrate the nature of the organized concerted actions of this Third Triumvirate, and the circumstance that one of the primary

purposes of each of the organizations it is composed of is to oppose ballot measures such as Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6.

As their websites demonstrate, the members of the Triumvirate all apparently believe that opposing ballot measures such as Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6 is one of their primary purposes, and it is apparent that the organization created by their joint efforts has no other purpose whatsoever than to oppose these two measures.

By so acting, the Port of Tacoma, the Economic Development Board of Tacoma-Pierce County, the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber and the organization they created to oppose Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6 failed to register or report campaign related expenditures made to oppose a ballot measure, and in addition failed to register or report as PACs as required by RCW 42.17A.205-240 of organizations opposing ballot propositions such as Tacoma Citizen's Initiatives 5 and 6

This violated the intent of RCW 42.17.0001, including section (1) That political campaign and lobbying contributions and expenditures be fully disclosed to the public and that secrecy is to be avoided.

Please investigate and take any necessary action in regard to this complaint and Citizen's Action Letter. If you believe any further information would be helpful to your investigation, do not hesitate to ask.

Done June 16, 2016, in Olympia. I, Arthur West, certify the factual assertions above to be correct and true under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of Washington.

  
**ARTHUR WEST**

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**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON  
IN AND FOR PIERCE COUNTY**

PORT OF TACOMA, a Washington State  
Municipal Corporation, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR TACOMA-  
PIERCE COUNTY, a Washington State Non-  
profit Corporation, and the TACOMA-  
PIERCE COUNTY CHAMBER, a Washington  
State Non-profit corporation.

Plaintiffs,

vs.

SAVE TACOMA WATER, a Washington  
political committee, DONNA WALTERS,  
sponsor and Treasurer of SAVE TACOMA  
WATER, JON AND JANE DOES 1-5,  
(Individual sponsors and officers of SAVE  
TACOMA WATER), CITY OF TACOMA, a  
Washington State Municipal Corporation,  
and JULIE ANDERSON, IN HER CAPACITY  
AS PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR

Defendants.

**No.**

**COMPLAINT FOR  
DECLARATORY JUDGMENT  
& INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. On or around March 7, 2016, Defendants SAVE TACOMA WATER, a  
Washington political action committee, DONNA WALTERS, sponsor and Treasurer of

COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY JUDGEMENT  
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160606.f.complaint

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1 SAVE TACOMA WATER, and JON AND JANE DOES (Individual sponsors and officers  
2 of SAVE TACOMA WATER) 1-5 (collectively "STW") submitted what became "Charter  
3 Amendment 5" ("Charter Initiative"). See Copy **Attachment A**. The Charter Initiative 5  
4 seeks that any land use proposal requiring water consumption of 1336 CCF (one million  
5 gallons) of water or more daily from Tacoma be submitted to a public vote prior to "the  
6 City" "providing water service" for such a project. (Section 4.24 (A)). STW's Charter  
7 Initiative expressly purports to elevate its proposed Charter amendment above state law,  
8 by pronouncing that "all laws adopted by the legislature of the State of Washington, and  
9 rules adopted by any state agency, shall be the law of the City of Tacoma only to the  
10 extent that they do not violate the rights or mandates of this Article. (Section 4.24 (B)).  
11 STW's Charter Initiative expressly also purports to overrule and/or disavow the United  
12 States Constitution, along with "international, federal [and] state laws" that "interfere"  
13 with the proposed amendment. (Section 4.24 (C)). STW's Charter Initiative further  
14 expressly purports to curtail the jurisdiction of state and federal courts, and to eliminate  
15 certain rights of corporations, in conflict with the Washington and Federal  
16 Constitutions, as well as U.S. Supreme Court rulings. STW apparently seeks all of these  
17 results by proclamations sought to be contained in the Tacoma City Charter.

18 2. On or around April 15, 2016, STW submitted what became "Initiative 6"  
19 ("Code Initiative"). STW's Code Initiative seeks to amend the City of Tacoma Municipal  
20 Code Title 12 to require that any proposal which will use 1336 CCF (one million gallons)  
21 of water or more daily from Tacoma be submitted to a public vote prior to "the City"

22 "providing water service" for such a project. The Code Initiative repeats all the same

1 defective provisions of the Charter Initiative, which conflict with the US and  
2 Washington Constitutions and state and federal law.

3           3.       The Plaintiffs Port of Tacoma ("Port"), Economic Development Board for  
4 Tacoma-Pierce County ("EDB") and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber ("Chamber")  
5 seek a declaration that both the Charter Initiative and Code Initiative are beyond the  
6 proper scope of the local initiative power, and seek injunctive relief.

7           4.       Local initiatives are limited in permissible scope.

8           5.       The City of Tacoma's Charter provides that the "initiative shall be  
9 exercised ... in accordance with the general laws of the state." *Tacoma Charter 2.19*.

10          6.       Local initiatives that exceed the scope of the initiative power of a city in  
11 any manner are invalid and should not be placed on the ballot. Pre-election challenges  
12 to the scope of the initiative power are both permissible and appropriate.

13          7.       STW's proposed Charter and Code Initiatives are beyond the scope of local  
14 initiative power for one or more of the following reasons:

- 15           a.       STW's Charter and Code Initiatives invalidly attempt to administer a  
16                proprietary function of Tacoma, which exceeds the scope of initiative powers.
- 17           b.       STW's Charter and Code Initiatives improperly attempt to oversee and classify  
18                utility customers which delve into an expressly legislative matter and thus  
19                exceed the valid scope of initiative powers.
- 20           c.       The operation of Tacoma City utilities exceeds the scope of initiative power  
21                given to the electorate.

- 1 d. STW's Charter and Code Initiatives are flatly inconsistent with the plain terms  
2 of Tacoma's Charter. Tacoma's Charter delegates the power to operate its  
3 water utility to the Tacoma Public Utility ("TPU") Board. *Tacoma Charter*  
4 4.10.
- 5 e. STW's Charter and Code Initiatives fail because their provisions are directly  
6 contrary to the water rights system established by the State.
- 7 f. STW's Charter and Code Initiatives conflict with Washington law that holds  
8 zoning and development matters are not subject to initiative power.
- 9 g. STW's Initiatives impermissibly seek to interfere with Tacoma's role as a  
10 regional water service provider, which role extends beyond the territorial  
11 jurisdiction of the City of Tacoma.
- 12 h. STW's Initiatives impermissibly seek to transfer grants of property rights from  
13 Tacoma's water utility to the "people".
- 14 i. STW's Initiatives are an invalid attempt to interfere with the authority vested  
15 in the Tacoma City Council to control Tacoma's budget.
- 16 j. STW's Initiatives conflict with state law by attempting to apportion between  
17 classes of utility users.
- 18 k. STW's Initiatives seek to strip the legal rights of any corporation that  
19 "violates" the "rights" sought to be established in Tacoma's Charter and Code  
20 by these Initiatives, which directly conflicts with the US and Washington state  
21 Constitutions and the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United*

22 *v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310, 342-43, 130 S. Ct. 876, 175 L.

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1 Ed. 2d 753 (2010), which held corporations have rights under the federal  
2 constitution.

3 l. STW's Initiatives must be invalidated because they expressly and  
4 impermissibly purport to disavow such superior law as state laws, state rules,  
5 federal laws, the United States Constitution, and the Washington State  
6 Constitution.

7 m. STW's Initiatives are wholly invalid and cannot be severed, salvaged, or  
8 salvaged in part.

9 8. The Plaintiffs seek resolution of these legal issues in accordance with the  
10 Washington State Supreme Court ruling in *Philadelphia II v. Gregoire*, 128 Wash.2d  
11 707 (1996), which held that the proper method for resolving whether a proposed local  
12 initiative exceeds the scope of local initiative power as seeking a judicial determination  
13 under Washington's Uniform Declaratory Judgment Act, RCW Ch. 7.24, before the  
14 County Auditor validates signatures and or places the matters on a ballot.

15 9. The Court should declare the Charter and Code Initiatives invalid and  
16 enjoin the County Auditor from (a) validating Petition signatures and (b) from placing  
17 the Initiatives on the 2016 November general election ballot.

## 18 II. PARTIES, JURISDICTION AND VENUE

19 10. Plaintiff Port is a special purpose public port district organized under the  
20 laws of the State of Washington. The Port has a legislative mandate to foster economic  
21 development in Tacoma and Pierce County. The Port has standing to challenge

22 Defendants' Charter and Code Initiatives because the Port also is owner of land both

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1 within and outside of Tacoma city limits. A critical segment of the Port's state  
2 mandated mission, use of tax dollars and business is to lease lands to tenants, which  
3 tenants can and do include industrial entities that may and do use over one million  
4 gallons of water a day.

5 11. More than 29,000 jobs are generated by Port activity, which also provides  
6 \$195 million per year in state and local taxes to support education, roads and police and  
7 fire protection for our community. [Port Economic Impact Study, 2014]. The Tacoma-  
8 Puyallup Industrial Subarea's 21,300 jobs make up 4 percent of the Puget Sound  
9 Region's industrial employment. [PSRC Industrial Lands Analysis, 2015]. These jobs  
10 pay an average \$80,000 a year. [PSRC Industrial Lands Analysis, 2015].

11 12. The state legislatively-mandated mission of the Port will be adversely  
12 affected by the passage of the Charter Initiative and Code Initiatives which, if adopted,  
13 would interfere with Tacoma's administration of its longstanding program to provide  
14 necessary water service to industrial and commercial users throughout Pierce County.

15 13. Plaintiff EDB is a nonprofit Washington corporation headquartered in  
16 Tacoma, Washington. The EDB receives funding by its member investors, including  
17 businesses, individuals, municipalities, and other governmental entities. The EDB's  
18 mission is to retain, expand and recruit primary company jobs in, to, and within  
19 Tacoma-Pierce County. To accomplish its mission and annual work plan, the EDB  
20 actively engages in public advocacy, business and economic development, physical  
21 improvement projects, public safety, beautification, and marketing programs. Each of

22 these programs is intended to ensure the continued success of Tacoma and Pierce

1 County's economic vibrancy. The EDB's member investors have pledged approximately  
2 \$500,000 toward the EDB's five-year work plan, which necessarily includes active  
3 engagement of elected officials, as well as businesses and industrial entities that may use  
4 over one million gallons of water a day. The EDB and its member investors have  
5 interests they are seeking to protect that are within the zone of interests (determination  
6 of water availability and interests) that the proposed Initiatives seek to protect or  
7 regulate. Moreover, the EDB and its member investors would suffer economic impact  
8 and injury should the Initiatives pass and serve to restrict the EDB's funded work plan  
9 to recruit, expand, and retain primary company jobs in Tacoma-Pierce County. Further,  
10 individual members of the EDB include Tacoma residents who are eligible to vote.<sup>1</sup> As  
11 such, the EDB has standing to challenge the Initiatives because the mission of the EDB  
12 and the economic interests of its member investors would be adversely affected by the  
13 passage of legislation in any form which interferes with Tacoma's administration of its  
14 longstanding program to provide necessary water service to industrial and commercial  
15 users throughout Pierce County.

16 14. Plaintiff Chamber is a nonprofit Washington corporation headquartered in  
17 Tacoma, Washington. The Chamber serves as a Tacoma/ Pierce County economic  
18 advocate, and strives to lead the way to exceptional business and community growth. It  
19 is dedicated to enhancing the quality and economic vitality of Tacoma and Pierce

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20  
21 <sup>1</sup> *Mukilteo Citizens for Simple Government v. City of Mukilteo*, 174 Wn.2d 41, 46, 272 P.3d 227 (2012),  
22 finding that an association of city residents had standing to challenge a proposed initiative because the  
23 individual members had standing as "Mukilteo residents who are eligible to vote."

1 County. The Chamber is involved in public advocacy, business and economic  
2 development, physical improvement projects, public safety, beautification, and  
3 marketing programs, all of which contribute to building a prosperous community. Each  
4 of these programs is intended to ensure the continued success of Tacoma and Pierce  
5 County's economic vibrancy, growth and prosperity. The Chamber's membership  
6 includes individuals and businesses throughout the City of Tacoma and Pierce County  
7 and the surrounding area. On behalf of its membership, the Chamber engages elected  
8 officials, (including elected members of the Tacoma City government and candidates for  
9 elected office) and promotes efforts to attract and support investment in Tacoma and  
10 Pierce County, which can include industrial entities that may use over one million  
11 gallons of water a day. Further, individual members of the Chamber include Tacoma  
12 residents who are eligible to vote.<sup>2</sup> The mission of the Chamber would be adversely  
13 affected by the passage of legislation which interferes with Tacoma's administration of  
14 its longstanding program to provide necessary water service throughout Pierce County.

15 15. Even in the unlikely event that the Court finds that one or more Plaintiffs  
16 lack standing, the Court should still address the issues raised in the matter because the  
17 issues of the validity of the two local initiatives involve significant importance that  
18 merit judicial resolution. *American Traffic Solutions, Inc., v. The City of Bellingham*  
19 *et al, Washington Campaign For Liberty et al , 163 Wn. App. 427; 260 P.3d*  
20 *245;(2011), see also See Farris v. Munro, 99 Wn.2d 326, 330, 662 P.2d 821 (1983)*

21 \_\_\_\_\_  
22 <sup>2</sup> *Id.*

1 (addressing challenge to state lottery even though plaintiff lacked standing); *see also*  
2 *Wash. Natural Gas Co. v. Pub. Util. Dist. No. 1 of Snohomish County*, 77 Wn.2d 94,  
3 96, 459 P.2d 633 (1969).

4 16. Defendant SAVE TACOMA WATER by information and belief is a political  
5 action committee, listing an address of 5020 South Asotin, Tacoma, WA 98408 on its  
6 Washington state Political Committee Registration. STW claims to exist for the sole  
7 purpose of advocating Tacoma Initiative No. 1 for the 2016 election year.<sup>3</sup>

8 17. Defendant Donna Walters is listed as the “sponsor” and “treasurer” of  
9 SAVE TACOMA WATER.

10 18. Defendants Jon and Jane Does 1-5<sup>4</sup> are the officers and/or responsible  
11 leaders connected to the political committee SAVE TACOMA WATER. Under  
12 Washington law, initiative drafters and sponsors are proper defendants in  
13 challenges to the scope of an initiative.

14 19. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants STW, Donna Walters  
15 and Jon and Jane Does 1-5 because these Defendants have registered as a Washington  
16 state Political Committee, or as Officer or Manager thereof and/or maintain offices and  
17 transact business in Pierce County, and seek results within Pierce County.

18  
19 <sup>3</sup> STW claims in its PDC Registration to handle less than \$5,000. (“No more than \$5,000 will be raised  
or spent and no more than \$500 in the aggregate will be accepted from any one contributor”).

20 <sup>4</sup> State law requires SAVE TACOMA WATER to register with the Public Disclosure Commission, and  
21 nominate “The names, addresses, and titles of its officers; or if it has no officers, the names, addresses,  
and titles of its responsible leaders...” RCW 42.17A.025(9)(c). Plaintiffs may seek to name additional  
22 Jon and Jane Doe defendants meeting the description set forth in RCW 42.17A.0255, as those persons  
become known.



1 and Chamber their fees, costs and disbursements in this action as allowed by law and  
2 equity.

3 5. For such other relief as the Court may find appropriate.

4 DATED this 6th day of June 2016. GOODSTEIN LAW GROUP PLLC

5 By /s/Carolyn A. Lake

6 By /s/Seth Goodstein

7 Carolyn A. Lake, WSBA #13980

Seth Goodstein, WSBA #45091

Attorneys for Plaintiff Port of Tacoma

8 DATED this 6th day of June 2016. LEDGER SQUARE LAW, P.S.

9 By: /s/ Jason M. Whalen

10 Jason M. Whalen, WSBA #22195

Attorneys for Plaintiff EDB

11 DATED this 6th day of June 2016. GORDON THOMAS HONEYWELL LLP.

12 By: /s/Shelly Andrew

13 Shelly Andrew, WSBA # 41195

Attorneys for Plaintiff Chamber

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From:

<http://www.tacomachamber.org/content/taking-political-action-business>

The Chamber promotes a pro-business agenda with political action programming. We study, analyze and make recommendations on a myriad of issues of interest to the Pierce County business community. When we take advocacy positions on those issues, we communicate the Chamber's viewpoint clearly and strongly to our membership, elected officials and the community at-large. The Chamber organizes events such as candidates forums and provide tools like an electronic listing of bills of interests during the legislative session. By providing strategic communication to our members, we keep them informed on upcoming elections, ballot measures and issues to help them make educated voting decisions.

## EDB joins Port of Tacoma, Chamber in lawsuit to protect jobs and the environment

Today, the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County, along with the Port of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, filed a complaint asking a Pierce County Superior Court to invalidate two proposed ballot initiatives in Tacoma.

The two proposed measures seek to require a public vote on any development that would use more than 1 million gallons of water a day – a requirement that courts across the country have said is illegal, and one that risks the health and future of Pierce County's economy.

"Putting water use for commercial projects up for a public vote will interfere with the EDB's core mission: to recruit and retain those businesses that bring new jobs, and new dollars, into Pierce County," said Bev Losey, Economic Development Board chair and senior vice president of insurance firm Brown & Brown of Washington.

"Environmentally progressive businesses succeed here, because we have a rigorous permitting process to protect the natural resources we all hold dear," Losey said.

The EDB's Board of Directors voted last week to join the lawsuit.

These initiatives, whose backers are currently gathering signatures, are similar to initiatives that have been declared invalid in jurisdictions across the country. Just this February, the Washington State Supreme Court unanimously struck down an almost-identical Spokane initiative. It ruled, among other things, that the initiative improperly tried to expand a city law into a constitutional issue.

In fact, state law is clear: Initiative and referendum powers cannot be used this way. Utilities are required to meet water and power demand in their service territories, and to make sure the infrastructure exists to support any legal use of water or power. Moreover, Tacoma Public Utilities' water division serves several jurisdictions beyond the City of Tacoma.

"The EDB looks forward to helping shed light on the value of a balanced portfolio of primary companies in the South Sound, including industrial manufacturing," said EDB President & CEO Bruce Kendall. "The most successful regions in the world – with the highest quality of life, including environmental quality – are those that embrace the global economy and innovate better approaches to creating products and services across a variety clusters.

"Environmental quality suffers when economies are weak," Kendall said.

Beyond simple short-sightedness, the proposed initiatives don't reflect the reality of industrial water use. Tacoma Water's statistics show that the average demand for businesses on the Tideflats has dropped by more than half in the past 30 years.

Pierce County, along with Washington state, has long balanced high environmental standards with policies that encourage businesses to grow and innovate. That commitment has led to a robust industrial sector that employs tens of thousands of skilled workers and pays an annual wage much higher than the median.

People who work with their hands deserve the same support and investment opportunities as white-collar workers. Putting up barriers to private investment like these ballot measures put an entire sector of the economy – and the jobs it creates – at risk.

The state, under the Environmental Policy Act, requires rigorous review of each development's environmental impact, including water use. Additionally, land-use and zoning issues are up for public debate regularly at the municipal level. There is no shortage of opportunity for public involvement on commercial development. Requiring a public vote on each one is unnecessary.