



Washington State Legislature

Export expansion is one of Washington's best opportunities for long-term economic stability
Special to the Tri-City Herald by Reps. Larry Haler and Brad Klippert

As the debate surrounding the export expansion wages on, there's a growing attempt to sidetrack public opinion from the real issue – trade and export development. Fresh off a lengthy budget debate, it's become abundantly clear to us that one of Washington's fundamental needs is to grow our economy. To do so, our state needs to take advantage and diversify export opportunities by providing a consistent and streamlined regulatory review process.

Export expansion is one of Washington's best opportunities for long-term economic stability, and as a result, a great opportunity to secure and improve the public good.

The trade and export industry is one of the foundations of Washington's economy, supporting about 40 percent of all jobs in our state. And, there's much room for industrial growth. Our facilities are projected to supply about 12,000 jobs, \$800 million in wages, and \$140 million in state and local tax revenue. In fact, a recent study for the Washington Farm Bureau even suggests these are modest estimates of the total economic impact to our facilities.

Indirectly, these private investments will help expand export opportunities for other bulk commodities, like agriculture and timber, through increased access to rail and international markets. Authorizing these proposed facilities will help modernize our trade infrastructure, ensuring long-term success for our export industries. Expanded exports will boost trade with global markets, allowing our ports to become more competitive in these growing markets.

There's no debating the economic benefits of these proposed facilities for our state and our trade industry. Unfortunately, export opponents have taken means to delay the reviews of these facilities; and creating a regulatory nightmare for the private investors is a real cause for concern.

Just as these private investments could help bulk commodity industries, an adverse change in regulations could unintentionally hinder commodity industries. Creating a regulatory maze would place new regulatory hurdles in the way of future projects and undermine economic development – something our state simply cannot afford. The consequences of inconsistent regulations will ultimately hinder our state's competitiveness in the trade and export industry.

Using red tape to selectively undermine economic opportunities is a dangerous precedent for our state. Opposition groups tend to simply oppose coal, based on false reasoning – putting economic growth and environmental preservation at odds with each other and creating a false “either or” problem. The truth is our state has been safely transporting coal for over a hundred years. We are home to some of the most rigorous and extensive regulatory reviews that protect both our environment and our economic well-being.

Our efforts will be focused on ensuring Washington remains a trade and export leader through private expansion. That means providing consistent regulatory reviews to foster the full potential of industry development. If we ensure our state’s reviews and regulations will help, not hinder, business development, it will go a long way toward spurring our state’s economic growth and prosperity.

(Reps. Larry Haler and Brad Klippert represent the 8th Legislative District, which includes the northeast part of Benton County, including Richland, West Richland and Kennewick.)