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CREATE A JOB GROWING ECONOMY LET'S GET BACK TO WORK IN 2009

*Priorities and positions to inform candidates and voters
prepared by the Alki Foundation, the political education affiliate of the
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce*

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After years of economic prosperity, the Puget Sound region is experiencing a widespread economic decline. As the downturn continues, businesses continue to cut back and the resources they provide to governments fall off. The Alki Foundation, an affiliate of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, is engaging the public and political candidates on the need to stimulate economic recovery, restore the tax base needed to sustain essential government services, and ensure an economic and regulatory climate that fosters capital investment and job growth over the long term.

We all care about quality of life. We all care about the quality of our air and water. We all care about the sustainability of our precious natural habitat. Our ability to assure all of the things we care about is threatened. Our state has a \$9 billion budget deficit. Our city and county governments are facing daunting cutbacks. The current economic crisis threatens that which we care about the most.

The only thing that will get us back to supporting what we really care about is smart policy and wise leadership. Now, more than ever, we need elected leaders who will help get our businesses back to employing folks and paying taxes, and our state back on a financial footing that allows us to pay for what we hold so near and dear.

It is businesses that employ people so that they have money to spend on what matters to them. Business also provides the majority of the tax base that allows governments to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. Business is not perfect, but it is a resource that must be protected now more than ever. Given the number of Northwest companies disappearing or drastically cutting back, and the ensuing loss of tens of thousands of jobs, there is an urgent need for elected leaders who are committed to supporting businesses and making job and economic growth their top priority. The 2009 election season provides an opportunity to find out where incumbent and aspiring elected officials stand on economic and regulatory issues that are important to the Puget Sound business community.

The upcoming elections will allow voters and candidates to explore the economic and regulatory issues that matter most to the business community and to debate strategies for achieving economic recovery and job growth. This much needed public dialogue with elected leaders and candidates will help define new policy directions and priorities for economic recovery and job growth.

This document provides positions and priorities of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce as well as general views of the economy and the business climate. We recognize that few candidates will agree with the Chamber on all issues, but we do believe that a candidate who is supportive of a job-growing economy will have little difficulty accepting the following three fundamental principles:

Job and economic growth are preconditions for community health. The government and not-for-profit sectors rely on a strong economy. These sectors cannot recover from their current budget problems and service overload until job growth returns.



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The business climate must be competitive for all types of businesses. Governments need to provide adequate infrastructure as well as competitive tax and regulatory climates for all businesses, whether large or small, global or local, service or manufacturing.

Innovation will drive long-term growth. The region needs to grow, attract and retain businesses that provide cutting edge products and services in sectors that have excellent future growth prospects. While the government should not be in the business of picking winners and losers in the business sectors, governments should support efforts of the business community to grow economic sectors deemed to have the greatest potential for job development.

The following policy issues and positions adopted by the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce will form an integral part of the dialogue between the Alki Foundation and candidates for office. Candidates should not view these as litmus tests, but should be willing and able to discuss their views on them.

CUT COSTS AND LIVE WITHIN CURRENT REVENUES

Most economists recognize that developing the jobs and economic activity necessary for economic recovery is largely in the hands of business, not government. Surely government stimulus programs have a short-term role. But, in the end, we must ensure that city, county and state policies create a positive and compelling framework to attract and grow businesses and jobs. In this context, our elected officials need to take a fresh look at the unintended impacts of simply raising taxes and costs on the very businesses we hope will return this region to prosperity. New taxes and fees for government services may be an option to consider, but only after exhaustive scrubbing of government budgets. At this time, increased taxes, fees and assessments will reduce the ability of businesses to independently create jobs, restore the current tax base and subsequently pull the region out of the recession. Examples of prudent fiscal policy include:

- **Stabilize utility rates:** Rate increases should be avoided in the near term and utilities should consider cost-of-service principles to guide future rate setting.
- **Repeal of head taxes:** This tax disproportionately penalizes businesses—especially small businesses.
- **No zoning taxes:** Zoning taxes or “incentive zoning fees” disproportionately transfer costs onto one segment of the community.
- **Resisting supplantation:** Governments should end the practice of using dedicated revenues as well as bond and levy funds to supplant prior funding commitments.

INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO RETAIN AND CREATE NEW JOBS

New leadership will fight for roads, transit and cost effective transportation alternatives to promote mobility and economic health. Current priorities include:

- **Alaskan Way Viaduct:** The Bored Tunnel Hybrid and the associated infrastructure improvement needs have been adopted by the state and enjoy widespread support. Construction impacts to adjacent residents and businesses should be limited and adequately mitigated.
- **SR 520:** The Chamber supports an expandable six-lane bridge alternative and encourages cooperation with the University of Washington and neighborhood stakeholders to find a solution to the Westside interchange that preserves capacity.
- **Freight mobility:** Continued investment is needed in freight mobility and multi-modal projects, including action as soon as possible on the South Spokane Street Viaduct and Lander Street programs.
- **Mercer Street:** This project, which is critical for surrounding businesses and residents and meets the throughput needs of the entire city, should be fully funded.
- **Sound Transit:** Sound Transit needs full cooperation from other local governments as it implements light rail to Northgate and Phase II investments.



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DEVELOP A COMPETITIVE AND STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN BASED ON PRIORITIES OF GOVERNMENT

Business leaders and community leaders must work closely with elected leaders to identify ways for our city and regional governments to more efficiently deliver services and save taxpayer resources. Elected officials can best help the community's overall goals by adopting and implementing a clear "business plan" that sets government spending priorities beyond current budget cycles, defines opportunities for prosperous public/private partnerships and enhances the region's competitive business climate by modernizing regulatory structures. As part of this business plan, government must adopt metrics and indicators to measure progress, define needs and identify the competitive strengths of other regions and countries.

CHAMPION BENEFICIAL LAND USES THAT ATTRACT BUSINESSES AND JOBS AND CREATE HOUSING

As growth management continues to squeeze the supply of land available for commercial, industrial, residential, institutional and public uses, local governments must take care to maximize the productivity of the remaining land base. Key land use priorities include:

- **Increased height and density:** Urban centers can support increased building heights and densities.
- **Transit-oriented development:** Urban centers and villages and areas along mass transit corridors should have more intense housing development, with heights in these areas higher than are currently under discussion.
- **Re-evaluation of industrial lands zoning:** The recent "one-size-fits-all" industrial lands ordinance doesn't take into account the different characteristics of the affected neighborhoods. A revised plan should expand definitions to allow greater flexibility and the best and highest use of these important land parcels.
- **Refrain from using land use policy as a bargaining tool:** Community benefit agreements extract unreasonable concessions and allow for the intrusion of issues unrelated to land use decisions. Adding in a labor agreement into a traditional land use siting issue only creates disincentives for a developer or business to be in Seattle—not the desired effect if we want to leverage business investments to create livable communities.