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February 26, 2013

Fellow citizen,

My core belief as an elected leader is that my efforts must foremost be driven by what best serves the public interest. Like anyone in elected office, I am also mindful of how things might play politically when I consider my actions. Regardless, I am always compelled to take that path that best serves those that have elected me.

Folks, we have to raise Seattle Port Commissioner salaries, which are now set at a token \$6000 per year. We must do this not for the benefit of commissioners, but for the public good. There are two reasons this change must be made.

First, we intend our government to be a representative democracy - that is "of the people, by the people, and for the people". For this to be true, average citizens must be reasonably able to serve in elected office. But that is not the case when it comes to serving on the Port Commission. The vast majority of us simply can't afford to give away half our working hours, no matter how much we might be drawn to public service.

The trifling salary imposes an unstated, but all too real, financial hurdle for those who might otherwise wish to run for the office. If you have to work full time to pay your bills, you will not apply. As a citizen, this notion offends me. We are a diverse county - geographically, ethnically, culturally, politically, and economically. We need the port commissioners to embody and reflect this diversity.

Second, the work of a Seattle Port Commissioner is critical to the continued job and economic growth in this region. It is not a ceremonial office. The role requires a substantial commitment of time and effort and we need it to be done well.

The jobs we create through the Port may well be the reason our kids decide to stay here and are able to make a good living. Well-educated, globally astute, technically savvy graduates can be paid livable wages thanks to the role the Port plays in our economy. Today, almost 200,000 jobs around our region depend on the public assets created by the Port - shipping terminals, SeaTac airport, passenger cruise facilities, and Fishermen's Terminal. Our plan is to add another 100,000 jobs more while reducing our ecological footprint as we do.

The citizens created the Port of Seattle for just that purpose a hundred years ago to insure that the economic growth spawned by our natural harbor served the residents of King County and not just the profits of railroads, timber companies, and shipping lines. The Port is a voter-empowered economic development agency of vital importance to our State. There are 75 ports in Washington, doing everything from developing data centers to incubating startup wineries and

ours is by far the largest and most significant. Our Port has an annual operating and capital budget of around a billion dollars, about 1,800 employees, and over 6 billion dollars in assets.

The port district is ALL of King County and includes almost two million residents, over one million voters, and just under 40 cities. The job of an elected Commissioner is more than overseeing the Port – it is serving all of these constituencies and advancing our collective economic interests. We need the Commission to be a leading voice on issues across the region from transportation policy, to shoreline management, to air quality, to tax policy, to workforce training, to name just some. Our region's economy is an ecosystem that must work together. It is a big job to be thoughtfully and usefully engaged everywhere it matters. In my opinion, that is exactly the job of a Seattle Port Commissioner and if it is not done well, we'll all be worse off.

At the February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Port of Seattle Commission, I announced that I will introduce a resolution proposing that salary for a commissioner be set at the same level as a part-time Washington State legislator, starting 2014. If adopted by the Commission, those elected to office at this year's general election in November would have an annual salary of \$42,106 versus the current salary of \$6,000.

If re-elected, I intend to personally waive the increase, which state law specifically allows. I do this not because I don't want a pay raise, but because I want it to be clear that I am motivated to take action because I believe it is in the public's interest to do so. As one who's served in this office for over three years now, I can attest to the reasonableness of the salary I'm proposing. It is appropriate and it has precedent with other part time elected officials. I hope more civically-minded citizens agree and will consider candidacy for a Port position. It is an important, challenging office worthy of their talents and the public investment.

I make this proposal now because we will have four out of the five commission seats on the ballot this year due to Commissioner Tarleton's election to the legislature and her subsequent resignation from the commission. And, I'm one.

In the last election cycle, only one of the two Port positions on the ballot had an opponent in the primary and the cycle before that one of the three positions had only one candidate. This is a poor recipe for an effective government.

Voters deserve choices - and we all need an effective Seattle Port Commission. I believe this change will help in both regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Albro', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Albro