

Dressler, Amy


From: Commission-Public-Records
Sent: Tuesday, February 9, 2016 3:25 PM
To: Albro, Thomas; Bellezza, DeAnna; Bowman, Stephanie; Creighton, John; Dressler, Amy; Felleman, Fred; Gregoire, Courtney; Merritt, Mike; Schirato, LeeAnne
Subject: FW: Written Testimony on I-200 Motion

Commissioners:

Below is public comment received today regarding your motion on repeal of I-200. This email from Henry Yates was not distributed in paper form during the meeting. All written comments for today's testimony will be incorporated into today's minutes as exhibits. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Commission Records

Port of Seattle
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From: "Yates, Henry" <henry.yates@comcast.net>
Date: February 9, 2016 at 1:03:24 PM PST
To: "Merritt, Mike" <Merritt.M@portseattle.org>
Subject: Written Testimony on I-200 Motion

February 9, 2016

Dear Port of Seattle Commissioners:

My name is Henry Yates. I am a former Port of Seattle employee of 15 years. I very much appreciate and urge you to vote in favor of the "Motion of the Port of Seattle Supporting State Policy Proposals, including House Bill 2822 to Repeal RCW 49.60.400."

I am an African American who has lived in Washington state my entire life. I own a small business and can personally attest to the fact that I-200 has kept me from numerous opportunities that may have been available. In some instances, I and others have been informed that unless there are requirements for "minority" participation, my business would not be needed.

It is a fact that most businesses owned by minorities are not equal to those of the majority population. There are many reasons for this — capitalization, social issues and a host of other factors, not to mention a legacy of discrimination that stretches back decades.

In this state and Oregon, there were many laws that did not allow most minorities to even own land and weren't repealed until sometime in the 1900's. At the local level, there were many laws

on the books that prohibited the advancement of minorities in business and elsewhere. For instance, in some of our state's local communities, Jim Crow was openly practiced into the 1950s.

By 1998, minority businesses were beginning to see some progress, but in that year, I-200 was enacted as another step toward a "colorblind" society and a promise of equality of merit and the limited role of government to make it so.,

What I-200 really did was to reduce the numbers of minority businesses and crimp education and economic opportunities to communities that were already suffering.

We in minority communities are living with the presence of I-200 in our lives everyday. Even in Seattle, likely the most prosperous and fastest-growing city in the nation, Black households specifically are in stress. In 2000, about a year after passage of I-200, the median annual income for Seattle's Black households was \$32,000 or \$44,800 in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars. Today, after the law has been on the books for almost 20 years, that figure is \$25,700. The median annual income in Seattle overall is \$70,200.

I want to end by emphasizing that income inequality is a huge issue that cannot be addressed just through raising the minimum wage. In this country, business has led many to a much better quality of life. Your support of the "Motion of the Port of Seattle Supporting State Policy Proposals, including House Bill 2822...." is very much appreciated and passage of this legislation will help create the sort of economic vitality you envision in the Century Agenda you crafted in 2012.

Let me add that while I-200 has created many barriers for minority-owned businesses, there are local governments in close proximity to the Port that have overcome many of these obstacles. I urge the Port to not only call for the repeal of I-200, but work to ensure that more opportunities are available as have other local governments, within the confines of this law.

Sincerely,

Henry Yates