

Misleading the voters. Measure 5-190 is legally flawed and will not punish the guilty or save jobs.

I believe the many good people of Columbia County were fooled by the simple ballot title for 5-190 and the simple message: punish the guilty employers and save jobs. But hidden in its confusing and flawed writing, this measure contains errors, omissions, confuses jurisdictions, and oversteps its bounds. With the information overload of the last election cycle, I believe the message that didn't get out to the good people of Columbia County is that this measure punishes innocent employers and citizens, doesn't punish the guilty, is legally flawed and unenforceable, and costs us jobs and valuable services to our community.

Punishes law abiding employers. Ineffective and costly.

This measure as written requires all organizations, even the self employed, to enroll in a federal program called E-Verify. But this program is designated for Federal Contractors. And enrolling to verify even a single employee comes with a set of responsibilities and liabilities that costs each employer time and money. For law abiding businesses, that don't bid on federal contracts, that have never hired undocumented workers and have no intention of hiring undocumented workers, this program has costs and no benefits.

I wear several hats. I am a member of a Scappoose church in search of a new pastor, a member of the Board of Directors of a local Christian preschool and daycare, a board member of the United Way of Columbia County, and a small business owner. In none of these capacities have we ever hired nor had any intention of hiring an undocumented worker. None of these entities would likely enroll in E-Verify, because there is a cost but no benefit. But under this measure, every church, preschool, daycare, charity and business is required to enroll ...

Increases the cost of government and schools

This measure also increases the cost to our government and schools as they also are required to enroll in E-Verify. They are currently not enrolled, because there is a cost but no benefit.

And E-Verify, in preliminary use with only 1% of employers nationwide, has already proven to be flawed and ineffective.

There is also the additional cost to government for notification, legal expenses, investigations, ...

10,000 bites out of our community

What is this collective cost to enrolling law abiding churches, preschools, daycares, charities, small & large businesses, government and schools into the flawed and ineffective federal bureaucracy - E-Verify? Who knows exactly, but it is like a punishment of 10,000 bites out of our community. And how will these bites be paid. They will be paid by cuts and increased prices –cuts to spending, cuts to hiring and wages, cuts to charitable giving, cuts to government services, increased prices to consumers, Each employer will find a different way to pay for these costs, but they will not receive any benefit.

Legally flawed and unenforceable

But what of the benefit of the measure, you might ask. Won't we punish the guilty? No. This measure confuses jurisdictions and oversteps its bounds. Measure 5-190 calls on Columbia County to revoke business and professional licenses and building permits, which it does not have the authority to do. Can a county government, for example, rescind a city- or state-given license? And the size of the fines called for, \$10,000, is beyond the authority of county government to impose.

Climate of Suspicion

And how would this measure propose to catch the guilty? This measure creates a climate of suspicion. This law and laws like it invite discrimination against anyone who speaks with an accent or looks “foreign.” Businesses that have never employed undocumented workers – and never would – may be forced to defend themselves against unwarranted accusations. All business owners and all job applicants in Columbia County will be at the mercy of this cumbersome, unconstitutional law.

Is it fair to all concerned?

And overall, I believe in fairness for all concerned: citizens, employers, employees, government, charities, churches, immigrants, and yes even undocumented workers deserve to be treated fairly. And fairness for all concerned requires action at the federal level. What would this nation look like if every local jurisdiction passed unique and contradictory laws seeking to enforce federal immigration policy?

Columbia County has been my home for 13 years. I love this county and have worked to serve this county well. I hope to continue to serve this county, and hope we find justice and fairness for all.