

AWB Press Release

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Initiative 937 Will Increase Utility Costs for Our Homes and Businesses

OLYMPIA—Opponents of Initiative 937 are likely to organize quickly in response to signatures turned in today to place the ill-conceived measure on the November ballot.

The state's largest business organization, the Association of Washington Business, has already gone on record urging voters to vote against I-937. AWB is comprised of over 5,600 small, medium and large businesses and serves as Washington's chamber of commerce. AWB members provide jobs for over 600,000 Washington residents. "Initiative 937 will increase electricity bills and utility taxes for Washingtonian households and businesses," according to Don Brunell, AWB's President. "AWB does support alternative energy such as biomass, solar and wind power, but I-937 will also restrict energy generation options in the future, and that is not good for our state."

"It reduces the options we have to provide energy at competitive costs," said Brunell. The cost to energy dependent businesses like manufacturing, food and cold storage industries and high-tech and semi-conductor companies is another major concern.

Michael Early, AWB member and Executive Director for ICNU (Industrial Customers of Northwest Utilities) said, "Good paying manufacturing jobs will be threatened by higher energy costs at plants throughout Washington. Should it pass, it will put Washington manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage."

"In the past five years our electricity costs have increased dramatically," said Judy Covert, AWB member and owner, Printcom, Inc. of Burien, Wash. "We don't need this initiative further increasing our electricity costs. Enough is enough."

Ironically, I-937's passage may help lower electricity costs in California as it raises them for Washingtonians. This is a strong concern for AWB member Inland Power and Light's CEO, Kris Mikkelsen. She notes that, "One of the main flaws of 937 is that it does not recognize hydropower as renewable, but the huge California market considers our small hydro renewable and is on the verge of having other policies that favor the importation of non-polluting energy – like our hydropower. The prospect of our utility having to replace some of our share of cheap existing hydropower with new, more expensive power in order to meet 937's standards will be costly for our ratepayers. Why they want to help Californians at our expense is beyond me."

Environmental groups have sought to push this poorly conceived measure in Olympia for years, but even with Democrats controlling the Legislature and the governor's mansion they have been unable to get legislators to seriously consider this so-called, energy portfolio proposal. They hope to get voters to ignore the adverse impacts on households and businesses and to generate emotional support for their schemes by going the initiative route.