



Media Release
For Immediate Release
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Tri-City Regional Chamber Board of Directors votes to support Initiative 1082

TRI-CITIES, WA — Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors have voted to support Initiative 1082, a measure to authorize employers to purchase private industrial insurance beginning July 1, 2012; direct the legislature to enact conforming legislation by March 1, 2012; and eliminate the worker-paid share of medical-benefit premiums. Board members approved the vote June 16 during the regularly scheduled monthly Board of Directors meeting.

“The governor and the Legislature have not taken action on the workers’ comp reforms that have been proven effective in other states. We couldn’t even get a hearing on a workers’ comp bill in the most recent session. Costs continue to increase and employers are frustrated,” said Tri-City Regional Chamber Vice President Colin Hastings.

Washington State’s per worker costs are the second highest in the nation according to the National Academy of Social Insurance. And while improvements in workplace safety have reduced injuries 55 percent since 1990, claims are taking longer and costs skyrocket as workers are off the job until their claims are resolved.

Starting July 1, 2012, the initiative would authorize private insurance companies to provide coverage for on-the-job injuries, ending the state’s century-long monopoly on the sale of workers’ compensation insurance and aligning Washington with the practice of 46 other states. Its other key features include:

- Creating authority within the Office of Insurance Commissioner to regulate private insurers and certify that they are able to provide the benefits and follow the rules set out in our workers’ compensation laws
- Creating a joint legislative task force to propose legislation to the 2012 Legislature conforming the state’s existing laws to the new system
- Ending the requirement that workers pay one-half of the premium tax for workers’ comp medical coverage, which accounts for \$315 million, or about 18 percent, of the overall workers’ comp tax.

“The status quo does not work,” concluded Hastings. “The real challenge is how to make our workers’ comp system less costly and more responsive to injured workers by treating them and getting them back to work as quickly and safely as possible.”

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