



Washington State Senate

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Senator Doug Ericksen
42nd Legislative District

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March 26, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

Thank you for your leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. To prevent the spread of coronavirus, your office and agencies have had to make difficult decisions about which businesses and industries should remain open and which should remain closed. In this time of crisis, it is understandable that oversights might inadvertently occur. I would like to draw your attention to one of these, and raise concerns about the administrative decision regarding the residential construction industry.

In the clarification to your Stay at Home order issued by your office yesterday, your office indicated that most commercial and residential construction should be considered a non-essential activity, and it ordered construction workers home.

The problem is that this order does not apply to all construction projects – it exempts public construction projects “to further a public purpose related to a public entity,” including publicly financed low-income housing.

I urge you to correct this oversight.

While low-income housing may be a priority for government agencies, the virus makes no distinction between workers on private and public construction projects. The risk of exposure is every bit as great on a governmental project as it is on commercial and residential construction. Many contractors work on both public and private projects – there is no valid distinction. These two classes of construction should be treated equally. If the shutdown of private construction is a medical necessity, then governmental construction should be halted as well.

To place public construction projects ahead of private construction is inequitable. It sends the wrong message to our citizenry that government is putting itself ahead of everyone else.

Private construction fulfills as important a role in our society as public construction, and it is a vital contributor to our economy.

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The restrictions your office has announced are dependent on public goodwill and cooperation. By exempting public construction, and halting private construction, your office creates doubt about the need for the restrictions in the first place. It undermines the goal your office has established, creates resentment, and stirs public opposition.

All construction must be treated the same. I urge you to alter your order today and allow all residential construction to proceed, with proper workplace social distancing and other safety precautions.

The other, and less-desirable option, would be to halt government-funded low-income housing construction.

I ask that your office determine what exactly is medically necessary, and base decisions on that principle alone. We should put the health of the populace first, and the needs of government second, and treat everyone equally under the law. Thank you for taking quick action to address this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug Ericksen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Senator Doug Ericksen
42nd Legislative District