

When Government Does Not Represent People Any More: a Little Story

Written by Ursula Euler, BestLifeThurston.com, January 7, 2023

I was at the “Future of Carbon Policy” Forum in Seattle on January 5, 2023, organized by the WA Business Alliance. I paid \$125 which is a pretty big hurdle for anyone who pays from community or personal funds. The Forum was held this year in the context of the WA Climate Commitment Act (CCA), that went into effect at the beginning of the year. Ever heard of the CCA, or the WA Business Alliance? No? Neither had I, until recently. The fact that there was a WA Business Alliance, and that it seemingly – through internet research - was connected to the Washington Conservation Voters (WCV) and Washington Environmental Coalition (WEC) was surprising to me and reminiscent of the highly filtered, and selective public relations work by WSDOT’s aviation expansion group (CACC).

Beth Doglio and several other WA legislators/officials were there (Joe Nguyen, Mary Dye, Hillary Franz), not that I know them the way that many others in the room seemed to. They all knew of the CCA. I got a chance to speak to Beth Doglio for a few minutes. She remembered me, maybe, from a Thurston Democrats Christmas dinner, at which I spoke to her about fake aviation expansion outreach and unsubstantiated benefit claims. Then and at the Forum, she gave me no indication that she would take any action in opposing aviation expansion. She referred me to HB 1040.

2023 HB 1040 codifies aviation expansion work, and continues the exclusion of public health, climate cooling and airport community concerns. I rarely listen to what lips say, but watch actions.

Beth Doglio is on the House Transportation Committee and she, or any committee member, could introduce a bill that asks for the dissolution of the CACC before any further recommendations are made. It would make sense to ask in its place for a broad and open look at transportation needs of all modes, road, rail and wing. But that would probably be too logical, right?

The Forum was attended by businesses who want to sell their ‘clean’ products (Volvo electric full-sized trucks, for example), business lobbyists, potential institutional buyers of ‘clean’ energy products, and the Department of Ecology, who runs the CCA’s cap-and-trade program. The cap-and-trade auctions begin this February. Senator Joe Nguyen mentioned that a good amount of money would flow in, which “is a nice problem to have.” It begs the question, however, how much more money could be raised – and for communities - if the CCA bill in section 7(a) did not give an exception for: “emissions from the combustion of aviation fuels.”

Many of the speakers spoke of the need for cooperation between business, government, and communities. This prompted my question to one, how she defined community groups and if, by a show of hands, we could find out how many were present. Two hands went up, in a room of about two hundred. She further explained that community can mean a person, such as myself, writing letters or people of like mind forging collaboration, getting together submitting a collective comment, but did not mention at whose expense, time and money. I thought to myself, how strange. Was I supposed to begin to use mega time and my own funds to bring together people from the public? I thought my ‘system’ was the ‘government,’ of the people, by the people, for the people, and for which I pay taxes and go to the ballot box. None of the elected officials spoke up to say, that they are representing people.

I wondered how many community and public interest groups knew of the CCA and how many of them know if and how they could make a claim to its cap-and-trade money. Why would the WA Business Alliance let them know? They are not a community group, or a government. None of their founders, lobbyists, members were elected, and they want that money for their own purposes. Perhaps the communities around SeaTac could ask to receive compensation for the decades-long health and wealth inequities, caused by SeaTac. Perhaps they could ask for

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the formation of a state-funded commission, within the Department of Health, that advises on mitigation of aviation health pollution in airport communities. Were they informed? I have a feeling that the WA Business Alliance already has a long list for that money and staff assigned.

Mary Dye, Ranking Member of the House Environment & Energy Committee, mentioned the next climate solution front: “wood burning.” She did not elaborate. “Watch out”, I am thinking. People are supposed to buy – expensive – electric cars, install heat pumps, which are a good auxiliary heat source, but neither warm enough in cold temperatures, nor cool enough in heat. And, people may soon not be able to use gas stoves, cooking and otherwise. Meanwhile, one new commercial airport in the south Puget Sound is going to stamp out all the emission benefits we can possibly gain from electric cars, in the surrounding urban areas, judging by Tufts University research around Boston’s international airport. Aviation-bio-fuels at the tail pipe burn the same CO₂ as fossil fuel, and the engines are just as loud.

The WA Business Alliance is splitting, according to its Web site, into the projects of Clean & Prosperous Washington and the Clean & Prosperous Institute, both non-profit organizations. A click-through also mentions the WA Business Alliance Fund as parent organization. These are typical set-ups, mutations and name choices for pseudo-science and political campaign contributors. These non-profits are exempt from federal income taxes, not obligated to disclose donors, and can make unlimited contributions to political campaigns. Their missions sound socially responsible, but they are political action committees (PACs). Since the Supreme Court Decision in 2010 Citizens United vs FEC, political campaign contributions from PACs have increased significantly.

The WA Business Alliance, according to its IRS Form 990, was formed in 2010. I would have liked to ask at the Forum, if it was formed before or right after the announcement of the Supreme Court decision. I am wondering how many more dark money non-profits were formed that year, but who has time to research that. I have to run and check my calendar and bank account so I can start – yet – another non-profit with **my** people and write letters and give 2-minute public comments, which are promptly dismissed and overshadowed by the WA Business Alliance on arrival. The Supreme Court decision should have been called Citizens Separated, because it separates people from government and puts a wedge in. The wedge is large political campaign contributions from PACs, and Boeing, and Amazon, you get the picture.

About one hundred community groups are mentioned on the WA Business Alliance web site as supporters of the CCA. After the panel discussions, I asked the WA Business Alliance Communications Director, where I could verify their involvement. She looked at me puzzled. I showed her my print-out of the list. I shared with her, that I am a member of Indivisible, for example, and that about six of its chapters are listed. “I have not been able to verify the support of Indivisible of the CCA, and I would understand Indivisible’s mission to be incompatible with working with a business organization,” I continued. She says: “Oh, WA Business Alliance is going away anyway, and it would take too much time to involve all these groups.” I said to her: “Exactly, that was what I was thinking. That would take a lot of staff.” She agreed. My response: “But you are listing them on your Web site as having been involved.” She ended the conversation, politely, of course.

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