

**Written Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Natural Resources
Hearing entitled “*The Federal Columbia River Power System: The Economic Lifeblood & Way of Life
for the Pacific Northwest*”**

Monday, Sept. 10, 2018

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Natural Resources, it is an honor to have the opportunity appear before you today at this oversight hearing on the federal Columbia River power system and its economic impact to the Pacific Northwest.

As the president and CEO of the Association of Washington business, which represents nearly 7,000 small, medium and large businesses across Washington state, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you today the vital importance of the Columbia and Snake river dam hydroelectric power system to Washington state’s economy.

As a former resident of the Tri-Cities, the dams are vitally important to the community and the Mid-Columbia region. And, as the president of the state’s oldest and largest statewide business association, our members rely on the Columbia River power system to power their operations in an environmentally friendly and cost-effective manner. Simply put, the energy system is the lifeblood of Washington state and the entire Pacific Northwest region.

The Columbia-Snake river dam system transformed Washington state’s economy, opening new opportunities for our agriculture community to access markets around the world, but to also support a sustainable future and strong economy.

The hydroelectric dam system aligns with our values – clean water, clean air and healthy land and waterways today and for generations to come. Our members – from the smallest businesses in rural communities to our large urban manufacturers – have proven it’s not an either-or; we can have both healthy rivers and a healthy economy.

Construction of the dams required a great deal of forethought and hard work by those who came before us. Those investments laid the foundation for a strong state and regional economy. They knew then what we know today: Low-cost power is a key competitive advantage, attracting high-tech and manufacturing jobs to Washington state.

The numbers bear that out: Washington’s manufacturing sector employs more than 282,000 people today and generated a total economic output of \$58.4 billion in 2016. The growing high-tech sector today employs more than 503,000 people across the state.

And, the dam system allows for robust and productive farm land where potatoes, wheat, apples and hundreds of other products are grown and harvested, then packaged by our vital food processing

Industry, powered by clean hydropower from the dams. Washington's agricultural land literally feeds people around the world.

This is also the heart of wine country. Washington state is the 2nd largest premium wine producer in the country with more than 940 wineries and 55,000-plus acres of wine grapes. This industry, like the other agricultural land, is critically dependent on the dams' water infrastructure for crop irrigation.

The Columbia River dam system provide low-cost, clean, renewable energy. In fact, nearly 70 percent of Washington's electricity comes from reliable, clean and renewable hydropower, which accounts for 40 percent of the hydroelectric generation in the United States.

Per capita, Washington is the most trade-driven state in the nation. International trade today accounts for 40 percent of all jobs in Washington state and is the largest driver of the economy. And, the dams are a critical component of trade. They serve growers and our seaports, moving products to market with a limited carbon footprint. Sixty percent of Washington's wheat harvest, worth billions to the economy, travels to West Coast ports via barge on the Columbia River to where it is shipped around the world.

And, the dams are key to the quality of life in this region. Families enjoy boating, fishing and recreation, activities encourage tourism and drive local economies.

For all these reasons, the association also supported HR 3144 to protect the Columbia and Snake river dams. Thank you to Washington's U.S. Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Dan Newhouse for their hard work on the legislation, which passed the House this year on a bipartisan vote. We also vigorously support your Appropriations provision to stop the spill order, and we hope Washington's U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell will accept the compromise language that will provide certainty for the river system.

It took strong, visionary leaders to build the dams that make up the Columbia-Snake river power system. They have proved hugely successful, producing power for Washington state, the Pacific Northwest region and the nation. And, the investments made – and continue to make – have transformed the region and its economy.

On behalf of Washington's employer community, we urge you to continue to support the Columbia and Snake river dams.