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Enviros win. Growth stops. Do you like it?

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So this is what it looks like when the extreme environmentalists get their way.

For two decades, enviros in our state have been striving to shut down homebuilding. No-growthers have argued, litigated, legislated, and lobbied for every law, regulation, tax and impact fee designed to stop homebuilders from building homes.

Enviro groups with righteous-sounding names like Futurewise and Earth First! Fight against virtually every single development and every single homebuilder.

State and local government agencies such as the Department of Ecology and the Puget Sound Partnership join the fray as well.

All these self-anointed priests of nature want to stop growth.

Well, they succeeded.

Growth has stopped. Housing starts in our state have been reduced 67 percent (from 52,000 to 17,000) since 2005.

The enviros won.

And here's what happens when enviros win and growth stops.

1. Unemployment rises

Over 62,000 construction workers in our state are out of work. The enviros and our Governor are fond of stating that these 62,000 workers can be retrained to be computer technicians or state workers. But what happens when everyone works for the state? Look at Greece or Spain for an example.

2. Budget Deficits Skyrocket

State government lost its cash cow, the construction industry. As a result, the state budget deficit is \$3 billion and climbing. Our Governor and some leading Democrats believe the state can tax itself out of the budget crisis. But you cannot tax an industry when it no longer exists.

3. Non-Construction Companies Suffer

When homebuilding stops, almost everyone suffers. Newspapers lose advertising revenue from the building industry, so reporters get laid off. Nurseries don't sell plants and shrubs to new homebuyers, because there aren't any, and therefore nursery workers are laid off.

4. Charitable Giving Declines

Builders are very generous. They sponsor baseball teams, soccer teams, and basketball teams. They contribute to the arts, the community, the Rotary and the Red Cross. So when growth stops and builders close their doors, charitable giving declines.

The enviros got their way. How do you like it?

Meanwhile, a delusional anti-growth Democrat Says, "Raise more taxes, fund more programs." Senator Karen Keiser (D-Des Moines) recently expressed her "sharp disappointment" in the state's failure to provide funding for her 2007 bill mandating paid family leave for workers. Keiser's bill was passed by the Legislature in the state's revenue glory days, when builders were building homes and people were working.

Keiser's legislation provides parents of a newborn or newly adopted child paid time off of \$250 a week for up to five weeks. The \$30 million a year paid family leave bill was passed with no specified funding source (Keiser unsuccessfully pushed for a payroll tax to fund the program). Funding was put on the back-burner when builders stopped building and the state's revenue gravy train derailed.

Despite the state's ongoing budget crisis and this year's \$800 million tax hike, Keiser still thinks paid family leave is a great idea and is working on a "strategy" to get the program going (which she acknowledges will be funded by yet another tax increase). She points out that other states have even more generous paid family leave programs.

Which other states do Keiser cite as examples? New Jersey and California, the poster children for unsustainable state spending.

According to Keiser, those are two states Washington should strive to emulate — yet both states face staggering budget deficits after years of gluttonous state spending. New Jersey's budget deficit is \$11 billion and unemployment hovers close to ten percent; that state is facing a government shutdown if the Democrat-controlled Legislature and Republican Governor can't come to some agreement on how to balance the budget. California is in even worse shape, grappling with a \$19 billion budget shortfall and 12.6 percent unemployment. Both New Jersey and California are drowning in the spending obligations committed by previous Legislatures.

Keiser, who worked for a union lobbying group for decades, has never created a job and never will. Yet she honestly believes private industry should cough up more taxes for her idiotic, socialistic schemes — the same schemes which have bankrupted California and New Jersey.