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## **REALTORS® PLEDGE QUALITY GROWTH**

*Opinion-Editorial (1)*

– by Phil Souza, President, Washington Association of REALTORS®

Our job as citizens in a democracy always seems to get a little tougher the closer we get to a major election like the one in front of us. Trying to sort out the truth among all the TV ads, and determine what a candidate will actually do if they get elected to office almost requires a crystal ball.

As President of the Washington Association of REALTORS® and a voting citizen, I'm proud that the REALTORS® understand this dilemma and has developed a tool for helping voters sift through the information they get. The "crystal ball" we have developed is called the "Quality of Life Pledge," and it has been given to every legislative candidate in the state.

Unlike your typical campaign promise, supporters of this pledge are putting their commitment in writing. The reaction from candidates has been overwhelming -- a list of the more than over 60 candidates, from both parties, who have signed the pledge is available at [www.warealtor.com](http://www.warealtor.com).

We all share in the electoral process and the issues that help us make up our minds are often the ones crucial to maintaining the quality of life we cherish here in the Northwest. Good schools, taxes, transportation, the environment, housing, economic growth, and public safety are among the issues we included in our "Quality of Life Pledge."

The pledge gives legislative candidates a chance to signal their support for building better communities through quality growth, environmental preservation and economic development in Washington State. This call to action for lawmakers entering the 57<sup>th</sup> legislative session outlines five major reforms aimed at boosting our Quality of Life.

Signers of the "Quality of Life Pledge" in the Washington State Legislature will work to:

- *Ensure economic vitality* – require comprehensive plans include an economic development element that promotes a healthy and sustainable economy and plans for how to achieve economic growth in our community.
- *Provide housing opportunities* – ensure that countywide planning policies provide regional cooperation to achieve a balance between jobs and housing, that comprehensive plans accommodate required growth by planning for housing units necessary for projected growth, and establish performance measures to gauge how jurisdictions are accommodating growth.

- *Preserve the environment* – provide a source of revenues for acquisition of property to protect salmon habitat, while compensating property owners for their property.
- *Protect property investments* – clarify that property owners are provided compensation for property reduced in value by government limitations.
- *Build better communities with good schools and safe neighborhoods* – fund transportation and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, parks, etc.) that provides the framework for a community's quality of life, and lays the essential groundwork for accommodating quality commercial, industrial and residential growth.

The candidates signing the pledge recognize that quality growth is good for Washington. Growth brings jobs, investment, better services, and homes for our families. New construction often provides jobs closer to the workplace, and the rehabilitation of aging neighborhoods keeps our communities vibrant by bringing new families into older areas.

Unfortunately for those who want their children to be able to stay in this area, there is a lack of available and affordable housing opportunities. This affects housing costs, and our quality of life. Housing availability is crucial to economic vitality because without adequate housing, transportation gridlock worsens as people have to drive farther from work to find the home they want, which in turn causes key workers and even companies not to locate in specific regions.

Beyond availability of housing, affordability plays a major role in accommodating quality growth in Washington. Economic growth drives both the demand for workers and the corresponding demand for housing. Accessibility to housing for all income levels is absolutely necessary for quality growth of the state and its individual communities as well. Without available and suitably located housing, it becomes increasingly difficult for companies to attract and retain a qualified workforce.

Given these challenges, the REALTORS® felt it important to get candidates on the record before they got into office, to gauge their willingness to seek solutions to maintaining our quality of life. And, judging from the response we received from candidates in a majority of the legislative races on the ballot this fall, it appears that we may have a legislature next year that is ready to provide the leadership we need.

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