

February 25, 2020

A Letter to the members of the House Economic Development and Workforce Services Committee, including Representative Mike Winder, Representative Derrin R. Owens, Representative Suzanne Harrison, Representative Eric K. Hutchings, Representative Karen Kwan, Representative Karianne Lisonbee, Representative A. Cory Maloy, Representative Carol Spackman Moss and Representative Calvin R. Musselman, Representative Francis D. Gibson

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you undoubtedly know, the Inland Port has from the outset generated (1) considerable attention and (2) even more controversy. Which means that quite a few Utahns may show up for today's meeting on Inland Port Modifications.

We live about two blocks north of the Capitol on Eastcapitol Blvd. On a clear day, we can see west across the north end of the valley to and beyond the airport. From our living room window, we can also see I-15 and the rail lines that run to and through Salt Lake City.

We purchased our home three years ago in part because its elevation, at about 4700 feet, placed us—barely—just above the inversions that are a regular feature throughout the valley. I recently learned that Salt Lake has the 7th worst air in the country...certainly an impediment to economic development.

Our rationale for moving was to get more light, more space and better air than we had in our previous downtown residence. My wife is a retired elementary school principal. Having spent decades as playground supervisor (it comes with being a principal), she now suffers from chronic asthma.

We are fearful that the development of the Port will result in an extraordinary increase in pollutants (we're already in the direct path of west-to-east air that blows up from the refineries) and force us to move beyond inhalers and into oxygen packs.

We're under the impression that the Port is putting the proverbial cart before the horse as there is no apparent environmental study in the works that would evaluate just how much additional pollution would result from more trucks, more trains and more cars going to and from the port.

For about a decade (1995-2005), I served as one of the lead PR people for the Utah Office of Tourism. It was my job to promote Utah to domestic and international journalists. I worked closely with my counterpart at the LDS Church and often with colleagues from Davis and Weber Counties. One of my favorite area destinations was the Nature Conservancy's Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve just outside Layton. It's an amazing place.

I mention this because I understand that the Port will have a disastrous impact on the millions of birds that fly to and through this region on their annual migrations, stopping here for "family reunions" and, of course, to breed. I have also heard that knocking back the annual mosquito invasion with toxic pesticides will inevitably lead to long-term injurious effects on us humans.

There are other reasons why the Port has become so entrenched in controversy but, based on overall impressions, we think its position as a terminal for receiving and shipping coal, for example, represents regressive thinking by the people who are supposed to represent the State's best interests for now and for the future.

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Fact is—and most rational people would agree—coal represents an industry that is already shrinking, and rightfully so, as it is one of the most egregious contributors to global air pollution.

You might have heard this old line from Yogi Berra: I came to a fork in the road and took it.

We think this would be an excellent time to hit the brakes at the old fork and face up to this fact:

The Inland Port is so fraught with problems that the best plan now would be to rethink the entire concept and move it much farther away from the largest — and still growing — metropolitan area in Utah.

Is this what I'm paying taxes for?

Help me understand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Kraus & Julie Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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