



Clark County Board of Councilors
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666

April 21, 2016

Re: Rural Economics - Rural Poverty - For the Record

According to **Mahmood Hasan Khan, Professor of Economics at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Canada** in a report to the **international Monetary Fund**, The causes of rural poverty are complex and multidimensional. They involve, among other things, culture, climate, gender, markets, and public policy. Broad economic stability, competitive markets, and public investment in physical and social infrastructure are widely recognized as important requirements for achieving sustained economic growth and a reduction in rural poverty. Generally, poverty cannot be reduced if economic growth does not occur. Numerous characteristics of an economy and society, as well as some external influences, creates and perpetuates rural poverty.

Examples:

1. Political instability and civil strife
2. Ill defined property rights or unfair enforcement of rights to agriculture and other natural resources,
3. Corrupt politicians and rent seeking public bureaucracies
4. Economic policies that discriminate against or exclude the rural poor from the development process and accentuate the effects of other poverty creating processes.

Policy basis that generally work against the rural poor include:

1. Urban bias in public investment for infrastructure and provision of safety nets.
2. Bias in favor of large landowners and commercial producers with respect to rights of land ownership and tenancy, publicly provided extension of services, and access to credit.

Strengthening the Rural Economy - The Current state of Rural America from the US Council of Economics Advisors reports that rural America faces unique challenges in growing it's economy and maintaining an educational and healthy labor force. About 17% of the US population (or approx. 1/5th) lives in rural counties, with the Eastern US a mixture of high density rural and urban areas. Today's rural economy has diversified substantially since 1970. Manufacturing, government services, wholesale and retail trade are important sources of employment for rural America. In total, they represent 68 and 76% of total employment for low and high density rural populations in 2007. Growth of services was particularly large over this time period. The agriculture sector is also an important, but declining source of employment and earnings for rural America. Among individuals who identify themselves as farmers, agriculture has become a less important source of income. Perhaps the defining feature in the history of agriculture is its persistent gains in efficiency. Incomes are lower and poverty rates are higher in rural areas than they are in urban areas. Recognizing these challenges, the Administration has made education a major pillar in it's policy for rural America. It's focus in expanding opportunities for small businesses, tourism, recreation and clean energy will also help to make rural households better off while attracting a new generation of young workers. A key aim of Federal Policy is to increase economic opportunities and overall standards of living in rural areas.

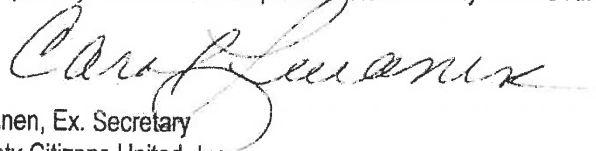
Alternative 4, proposed for the 2016 update of the Clark County Comprehensive Plan, is the only alternative that addresses the economic needs of the rural community and fulfills the desired outcomes of these reports. Clark County Citizens United, Inc. highly recommends that the Board

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of Councilors considers Alternative 4 as the only alternative that meets the economic needs and can reduce poverty levels of unincorporated Clark County and it's rural and resource communities.

Sincerely,



Carol Levanen, Ex. Secretary
Clark County Citizens United, Inc.
P.O. Box 2188
Battle Ground, Washington 98604