

News Release

For Release: Immediate

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Energy Action Northwest files formal complaint with the IRS against Columbia RiverKeeper; Requests investigation into political activities prohibited by law

(Portland, OR – December 1, 2009) Energy Action Northwest (EANW), a business and labor coalition devoted to promoting rational energy policy, today filed a complaint with the Internal Revenue Service against Columbia Riverkeeper (CRK). The letter requests the IRS to investigate CRK's political activities to determine whether CRK may continue to operate as a tax-exempt organization. Non-profit organizations (such as CRK) are prohibited from engaging in either direct, or indirect, election activity.

Energy Action Northwest's complaint is based on evidence that indicates CRK has violated, and continues to violate, the prohibition against political activity, by participating in campaigns supporting the recall of Clatsop County Commissioners who have voted on various land use issues relating to the development and construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal on the Columbia River.

Energy Action Northwest Executive Director Tom Ivancie said, "We believe the information we've assembled, including various documents, news articles, online postings, web pages and emails, provides conclusive evidence of CRK's participation and intervention in the political campaigns supporting the recall of Clatsop County Commissioners Jeff Hazen, Ann Samuelson, Patricia Roberts, and Richard Lee."

Some of the evidence was initially reported in NorthCoastOregon.com (NCO) two weeks ago, and revealed communications and other recall campaign-related activities among CRK staff and its Executive Director, attorney Brett VandenHeuvel. The article showed that, in contrast to explicit written assurances made by CRK to the Clatsop County Commission, the organization was involved in the recall efforts.

"Since the initial NCO story was published, additional information has come to light to suggest that CRK not only participated in prohibited political campaigns, but is also actively directing and leading many of these efforts," said Ivancie. "By engaging in such efforts, CRK forfeits the right to its tax-exempt status, which is reserved to those charitable institutions devoted to serving the public good."

Thanks to CRK, Clatsop County has been forced to conduct four special elections in the last two years. These elections have diverted scarce public funds away from already under-funded County services for the poor, mentally ill and public safety. Using the County Clerk's estimate that each special election has cost nearly \$10,000, the total cost to Clatsop County taxpayers is approaching \$40,000.

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The Job Keepers.

“In our view, CRK has consistently misrepresented the facts surrounding proposed energy projects,” said Ivancie. “Their stated goal is to delay (at every turn) the development of needed infrastructure that is vital to the economic interests of our region and the jobs of thousands of Oregonians. If CRK believes that election activity is an important component of their strategy, they should pursue it, but they should not be allowed to enjoy tax-exempt status at the same time.”

The documents associated with today’s complaint can be viewed at EANW’s website:
www.energyactionnw.org.

Energy Action Northwest is a public policy advocacy group representing businesses and labor organizations in the Pacific Northwest that are concerned about the reliability and affordability of electricity and natural gas. Its members support energy policies based on sound economics, science, rational environmental stewardship and competitive cost. Energy Action Northwest also provides accurate information and context needed to correct misinformation created by certain opponents to the development of new energy infrastructure in Oregon and Washington.