The banks crashed the Washington economy. Now they need to fix it.

In the past year, Wall Street and the big banks have taken $4.7 trillion[1] from U.S. taxpayers but have failed to pass the benefits on to our communities. The consequences have been devastating: 6 million lost jobs, $6 trillion in lost homeowner wealth,[2] and up to $58.0 billion in lost annual property taxes.[3]

Americans urgently need solutions, both big and small, but the banks are not doing their part. Instead, the banks plan to pay $74 billion[4] in bonuses and compensation this year, while foreclosing on millions more homes, cutting back on lending to small businesses and state and local governments, and raising consumer fees.

The banks' actions have also crippled state and local government budgets, which depend on property and income taxes to fund basic public services. For 2009/2010, states have faced budget shortfalls of $163 billion.[5] In Washington, the 2010 shortfall is $3.6 billion.6 This year, federal stimulus money has helped states partially fill the funding gap; but so far these funds are only a one time injection and even this year haven't been enough. Washington used $5 billion of stimulus money to help close the state's two year funding gap of $9 billion .7

Taxpayers made trillions available to rescue the banks and now it is time for the banks to do their part to stimulate the American economy:

1. Stop foreclosures and help save Washington State homes.

Washington state has been crippled by banks' foreclosures and the resulting home value declines. More than 26,000 homes were affected by foreclosure filings in 2008 alone,[8] contributing to a loss of home value which has exceeded $349 billion in the last three years. Furthermore, as property values are assessed downward, this decline in home values will cost the state's local governments $2.7 billion in annual property tax revenues. In King County, for example, homeowners lost $48 billion in home value and homeowners in Spokane County lost$1.8 billion in home value, which could drain $384 million and $18 million respectively in annual tax revenue from these counties and their municipalities as properties are reassessed.

Yet the worst has not passed. The Center for Responsible Lending projects that there will be 128,093 more foreclosures in Washington state from 2009 to 2012.[9] Banks must **implement a foreclosure moratorium now to stop the bleeding and begin to repair our communities.**

If the banks stop foreclosures and allow families to remain in their homes, they could:

- Keep an estimated **128,093 Washington state families** in their homes [10] and save **$27 billion in Washington homeowner wealth**.[11]
- Stop the budget free fall and help state and local governments preserve as much as **$230 million in annual property tax revenue**.[12]
- Save additional **$55 million in local government costs** associated with dealing with foreclosed properties – and much more in the event that the banks do not keep up or secure the properties.[13]

To put these potential savings in perspective, Seattle closed a $72 million budget shortfall with painful cuts,14 including implementing 10 furlough days for nearly 6350 city employees15 and the lay off of more than 100 teachers.16 Similarly, Spokane closed its $7 million budget shortfall for this year,17 with cuts such as the lay off of 103 teachers to save the city $9 million.18

2. Provide the same affordable loans to state and local governments that banks receive from the federal government.

Wall Street and the Big Banks are exacerbating the budget crisis, forcing cuts to vital public services and potentially triggering new waves of layoffs. As part of the banking industry bailout, the federal government is lending money to banks at a "special" interest rate for short-term borrowing that is speculated to be as low as 0.5%. However, when state and local governments need to obtain short term financing, they pay market rates between 2-4%, costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in interest payments.

If the banks were to lend directly to state and local governments at the same special interest rate for short-term loans that they are offered by the Fed, they could:

- Save taxpayers an estimated **$792 million nationally** in interest payments on the states' outstanding short-term debt.
- Save **Washington State taxpayers** an estimated **$3 million** in interest payments on the state's outstanding short-term debt.
- Those savings could help the state restore the $255 million cut from basic health that will prevent 40,000 lower income individuals from accessing health insurance,19 or the $67 million cut to preventive public health programs including the elimination of universal vaccinations.20
- The savings could also help stave off the estimated 8,000 prospective government layoffs.21

3. Restore small business lending to save jobs and tax revenue.

Since receiving a taxpayer bailout, banks have decreased small business lending through the SBA 7(a) program, the Small Business Administration's main program. Between October 2008 and April 2009, SBA 7(a) lending declined 42% over the previous year. Meanwhile, the national unemployment rate has climbed 59% since October from 6.1% to 9.7% (75% increase in the

Seattle area). In a National Small Business Association survey, 56% of small businesses that have problems finding available credit reported having to lay off employees as a result.[22]

If the banks restore small business lending to last year's levels, they could inject an estimated $161 million into the Washington State economy annually ($5.4 billion nationally). This would inject an additional:

- **$127 million** into the **Seattle** area local economy by way of loans made through the SBA's Los Angeles and Santa Ana district offices.
- **$29 million** into the **Spokane** local economy by way of loans made through the SBA's San Francisco district office.
- Since June 2008, 64 tech companies—large and small—in the Seattle area have been forced to layoff 3400 workers.23
- Small businesses like Seattle's Gracewinds Perinatal Services could still be open for business providing much needed pregnancy, birthing and infant care products and services. Gracewind has won multiple awards including a U.S. Chamber of Commerce regional finalist nominee and its business plan was vetted by multiple business experts. Despite forgoing nearly a year's worth of pay and investing more savings into the business, the owners were unable to save a once thriving company, and they now face the prospect of also having to sell their home to pay off debts.24

4. Lower interest rates on consumer credit cards and stop charging abusive overdraft fees to put billions back in consumer pockets.

As Washingtonians struggle with job losses and foreclosures, banks are raising credit card and banking fees to make a profit. Banks have tightened consumer credit by substantially raising credit card interest rates, even on customers who haven't missed a payment. According to a recent study, banks stand to make $38.5 billion in overdraft fees this year. Reduced credit availability and increasing bank fees lower consumers' spending power, which can impact consumption and stifle economic recovery. Monthly personal consumption declined by $227.5 billion between September 2008 and June 2009.[25]

If the banks lower credit card interest rates by just 1%, they could inject $194 million back into the Washington State economy every year ($9.1 billion nationally). This would inject an estimated:

- **$99 million** back into the **Seattle** area local economy every year.
- **$14 million** back into the **Spokane** area local economy every year.

If the banks stop charging abusive overdraft fees, they could inject $616 million back into the Washington State economy. This would inject an estimated:

- **$397 million** into the **Seattle** area local economy.
- **$39 million** into the **Spokane** area local economy.

1 http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5heUXausbmwbNjC7_DaF4ZnJ3dYhgD99IEBJG4
2 http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS153982+03-Feb-2009+PRN20090203
3 Calculation is $6.1 trillion x 0.95%, the median effective property tax rate for U.S. owner-occupied housing. Source: http://www.taxfoundation.org/files/proptax_owner-occ_bystate2004-2007-20080923.xls.
4 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/22/AR2009072203687.html?hpid=topnews
5 http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1283
6 McNichol, Elizabeth and Iris J. Lav, "New Fiscal Year Brings no Relief from Unprecedented State Budget Problems." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 29, 2009.
7 Woodward, Curt, :Wash. Legislature passes budget ot bridge $9B gap." The Associate press State & Local Wire, April 26, 2009.
8 http://www.realtytrac.com/ContentManagement/PressRelease.aspx?ItemID=5781
9 CRL released foreclosure projections by state in January 2009. However, in May 2009, when CRL updated its projected foreclosures for 2009-2012 from 8.1 million to 9 million, it did not release new state-specific estimates. SEIU updated CRL's state estimates to May 2009 under the assumption that each state's share of national foreclosures would remain constant. Specifically, each state's January 2009 state estimate was adjusted by adding the following: 900,000 x (the state's January 2009 estimate / 8.1 million). Sources: http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/tools-resources/projected-foreclosures-by-1.html; http://www.nhc.org/Credit%20Suisse%20Update%2004%20Dec%2008.doc; http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/soaring-spillover-3-09.pdf.
10 Adjusted CRL data. See above for discussion of adjustments. Sources: http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/tools-resources/projected-foreclosures-by-1.html; http://www.nhc.org/Credit%20Suisse%20Update%2004%20Dec%2008.doc; http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/soaring-spillover-3-09.pdf.
11 The estimates of the homeowner wealth which could be saved reflect the immediate impact a foreclosure has on a) the property value of a foreclosed home (direct impact), and b) the property values of nearby homes (indirect impact). The estimates only include the declines associated with individual foreclosures and do not reflect the broader housing market improvement which might result from a bank moratorium on foreclosures. Direct impacts were calculated using the Tax Foundation's analysis of American Community Survey property value data and a methodology from the U.S. Joint Economic Committee. Indirect impacts were calculated by the Center for Responsible Lending. Projections for foreclosures by state are from the Center for Responsible Lending and were adjusted in the manner discussed above. Sources: http://www.taxfoundation.org/files/proptax_owner-occ_bystate2004-2007-20080923.xls; http://jec.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Reports.Reports&ContentRecord_id=c6627bb2-7e9c-9af9-7ac7-32b94d398d27&Region_id=&Issue_id=6b00ae19-7e9c-9af9-7cb0-83a2e779eb00.
12 The estimates of property tax revenues which could be saved were calculated by applying the effective tax rates derived from the Tax Foundation's analysis of American Community Survey data to the foreclosure and property value data discussed above. Source: http://www.taxfoundation.org/files/proptax_owner-occ_bystate2004-2007-20080923.xls.
13 The estimates of local government costs associated with responding to foreclosures are based on a study of Chicago by Harvard professor William C. Apgar. Dr. Apgar calculated the municipal cost for ten different foreclosure scenarios. The above estimates are based on the projected number of foreclosures (adjusted from CRL data) multiplied by the costs of Dr. Apgar's second least-expensive scenario – that of a foreclosed home sold at auction which is vacant but secured (cost: $430/foreclosed property). Costs associated with foreclosures could be much higher, however. For example, the third least-expensive scenario – in which a foreclosed home sold at auction is vacant and in violation of municipal code – costs local government $5,358. Source: http://www.995hope.org/content/pdf/Apgar_Duda_Study_Full_Version.pdf.
14 City union members vote to participate in furlough plan for 2010." State News Service, August 28, 2009.
15 "City union members vote to participate in furlough plan for 2010." States news Service, August 28, 2009.
16 "School Officials Juggle Budget Deficits, Swine Flu." National Public Radio, August 24, 2009.
17 http://www.spokanecity.org/government/budget/

18 City of Spokane Budget: Facts & Frequently Asked Questions, May 2009.
19 Rep Linville, Proposed 2009-11 Biennial Operating Budget & 2009 2nd Supplemental, April 24, 2009, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/ABPub/2009/04/24/2009116736.pdf, p.5; Garber, Andrew and Jennifer Sullivan, "Proposed budget cuts hit schools and health care, but parks would remain open." The Seattle Times, May 3, 2009, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2009112434_webbudget23.html.
20 Chapman, Jeff and Stacey Schultz, "Governor's Budget Undermines Progress." Washington State Budget and Policy Center, January 15, 2009, p.7 .
21 Woodward, Curt, "Washington budget cuts take bite out of education, health and human services." Lewiston Morning Tribune, April 24, 2009.
22 http://www.nsba.biz/docs/09CCSurvey.pdf
23 http://www.xconomy.com/seattle/2008/11/13/tallying-seattles-tech-life-sciences-layoffs/
24 Gregg, Deirdre, "Caught in crisis, lauded small business Gracewinds shuts door." Puget Sound Business Journal, November 10, 2008.
25http://www.bea.gov/national/nipaweb/TableView.asp?SelectedTable=82&ViewSeries=NO&Java=no&Request3Place=N&3Place=N&FromView=YES&Freq=Month&FirstYear=2008&LastYear=2009&3Place=N&Update=Update&JavaBox=no