

Elizabeth Oliver

I am a lifelong resident of Washington State. I have lived in Spokane and Spokane County my entire life. I love this state and everything we stand for. I am writing today to make it clear I do not support the Newport Smelter.

There are many claims being made that this smelter will provide more work in the area and it is aligned with Washington's goal of increasing alternative energy. I don't believe either of these claims to be true.

Like any manufacturing plant, stable work will fluctuate based on supply and demand. The US has many smelter plants operating. Flooding the market with additional product will only lead to layoffs and further economic instability. Any employment from the construction and operation of the Smelter will be short-lived, or on a much smaller scale than is claimed.

Governor Jay Inslee believes building this plant will help Washington reach its goal to be eco-friendly. While silicon smelters do produce products used in the construction of solar panels, it accounts for a very small percentage of production. The smelting process will create many toxic greenhouse gases that will have a huge impact on the area. The air will be polluted, the land will be polluted, acid rain will fall, and wildlife will be impacted.

What will that mean to us here in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho? This region loves its outdoor recreation, fallout from the toxins emitted from this plant will affect this. Will our trees die and wither, creating tinder for our next wildfire season? Will our livestock and wild game be poisoned and inedible? Will our water continue to be safe to drink? Will there be a spike in children developing asthma? Ask yourself, do these risks outweigh the potential benefits? Look at Anaconda, Smelterville, and the Kellogg Valley. All of these areas are still recovering from the pollution created from mining and production. Do we want that for Newport as well?

While earning my degree at EWU in History, I was engrossed in the history of the Inland Northwest. We have a track record of putting financial gain over the health of our natural environment. We have over-fished, over-logged, over-dammed, and over-mined. When will we put our citizen's and our environment's health over a FOREIGN business's financial gain? When will we stop repeating history? Draw the line here, do not allow this plant to be built.