JAMES PETERSON

I''m concerned about provisions that give Ecology a larger role in local permitting decisions. State agencies should provide guidance and technical expertise, but they shouldn''t become the final decision-maker on projects happening in local communities. Cities and counties are accountable for their decisions. If a project is approved or denied, they have to defend that decision and bear the consequences.

What troubles me is that Ecology can influence local decisions significantly without the same level of accountability. If an agency can''t be sued over a permitting decision, it shouldn''t have the authority to effectively dictate the outcome. Too often, local governments spend months reviewing a project, holding public hearings, and reaching a decision, only to face pressure to reverse course. That creates a murky process where applicants aren''t sure who is really in charge. The result is more delay, more uncertainty, and higher costs. State agencies should partner, not serve as a veto point after the fact. Ecology should revise this proposal to preserve local decision-making authority and provide a clear, predictable permitting process that supports housing production rather than making it harder to build the homes Washington needs.