

## **BUSINESSES TO APPROVE REFERENDUM 71 STATEMENT**

We are a group of businesses who stand united together by the commonality of our companies' core values, which respect and support employees with diverse backgrounds. We are committed to supporting our employees and our customers and to ensuring the health of our communities. Accordingly, we support the campaign to Approve Referendum 71.

Approving this referendum will preserve Senate Bill 5688, a measure passed by the Legislature in 2009 to extend to state-registered domestic partnerships the benefits, obligations and responsibilities that apply to traditional marriages. The law does not sanction or encourage same-sex marriage. It simply recognizes that, regardless of their sexual orientation, people may enter into partnerships and create family units that deserve respect and equal treatment.

Overturing this law would undo years of equal rights progress made in Washington state. We do not believe that this step backward would be in the best interest for the future of our state.

As businesses, we strive to create workplaces where all employees can develop challenging careers with opportunities for growth, competitive rewards and a balance between work and home life. In a fast-paced, competitive environment, this is a shared responsibility between our companies and our employees. For this reason, our companies have adopted progressive policies that foster a diverse and inclusive work environment. Our employees know that they will be treated fairly, without being subject to prejudice or discrimination.

Unfortunately, not everyone enjoys these same basic protections in other aspects of their lives. The Legislature took an important step in that direction by passing SB 5688, and did so without placing any undue burden on the business environment or imposing excessive taxpayer cost. We believe that this action was consistent with our corporate principles in treating all employees with fairness and respect.

We embrace everyone's fundamental right to be judged on their merits and contributions rather than factors such as their sexual orientation. Because rejecting the law would stem progress toward that goal, we urge a vote to approve Referendum 71.

Businesses to approve R-71 - Boeing, Microsoft, Nike, Puget Sound Energy, RealNetworks and Vulcan.