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Washington Farm Bureau files property-rights initiative

OLYMPIA--Washington Farm Bureau today filed an initiative with the Secretary of State's Office that would require state and local agencies to clearly identify how new regulations would affect property owners and their impact on land use and property values.

Dan Wood, director of Government Relations, said today's filing provides the framework for a more detailed initiative that will be filed after the Washington Farm Bureau board of directors meets early next month.

"This gets the initiative process started and will allow us to begin collecting signatures sooner," Wood said.

Farm Bureau will need to gather about 235,000 signatures by July 7 to place the Property Fairness Initiative on the ballot in November.

The filing today states the intent of the initiative: "to protect use and value of property from excessive regulations by state and local government," and sets forth the requirement that state and local agencies consider the impact of proposed regulations on land use and property values before taking action.

Washington Farm Bureau, a nonprofit advocacy organization for family farmers and ranchers, will amend today's filing after the board meeting.

"We are a grassroots organization and our members have been very involved in helping draft our initiative," Wood said. "Our board of directors, with representatives from 23 county and multi-county Farm Bureaus across the state, will approve the final initiative."

Wood said broad government regulations have made it increasingly difficult for farmers and ranchers, and other property owners in Washington, to use and enjoy their land in reasonable ways.

Under the framework filed today, agencies would be required to state the purpose of any land-use regulations and identify any "actual harm or public

nuisance" that the regulations are designed to stop or prevent.

The agencies would also be required to determine "damage to the use and value of the affected parcels," and encouraged to accomplish the goals of proposed regulations through "voluntary programs with willing property owners."

"The bottom line is that government agencies need to respect individual property rights," Wood said. "Our initiative will go a long way toward ensuring that property owners can continue to use their land in reasonable and productive ways, without excessive, burdensome and unnecessary government regulations."

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