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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southwest Washington Officials Respond to Rejection of Proposition 1
*Current and newly-elected officials from the federal, state, county and city level
push for a new path for CRC*

VANCOUVER – Today, ten current and newly-elected officials from across Clark County issued a joint statement in the wake of Clark County citizens’ rejection of Proposition 1. The statement was issued by U.S. Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler, Washington State Senators Don Benton (17th District) and Ann Rivers (18th District), Washington State Representatives Paul Harris (17th District) and Liz Pike (18th District), candidates for Washington State Representative Brandon Vick (18th District) and Julie Olson (17th District), Clark County Commissioner Tom Mielke, candidate for Clark County Commissioner David Madore, and Vancouver City Councilman Bill Turlay.

“Clark County citizens sent a message with their ballots on Proposition 1: it’s time to revise the plan to replace this bridge. The failure of Proposition 1 is only the latest in a number of major financing, design and process challenges to the CRC’s preferred alternative. While we believe the current I-5 bridge is inadequate and must be addressed, a new direction is needed.

“We are concerned that the CRC’s mounting problems are jeopardizing the project’s chance for success, and we care too much about this region to simply let it fail. The rejected proposal to pay for light rail operations and maintenance is only the tip of an iceberg threatening to derail the project as currently proposed.

“Consider the funding problems. No state-level financing plan has earned the support of either Oregon or Washington legislatures to meet the \$900 million they are being asked to pay. There are serious concerns about the use of tolls to fund \$1.4 billion of the project’s costs -- concerns about whether tolling projections are flawed and can come close to this funding level, and concerns from citizens unwilling to shoulder the tolling burden for a project that doesn’t meet their needs.

“Right now, the CRC does not have a design that will earn the necessary permits to move forward. The Coast Guard has signaled that it will not permit a design with insufficient clearance capacity – nor should it. It would be unwise and illogical to build a bridge that won’t allow the passage of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) dredging vessels, or of ships owned by private businesses that support our economy. Furthermore, the CRC’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is significantly flawed. We cannot see how the USACE will grant permits for channel and levee alterations that are completely absent from the EIS. A redone or amended EIS will likely require a new public process. Consequently, a redesign will take more time, but significant delays to the project already appear inevitable.

“Perhaps most troubling about the current design is that the project’s users – the public -- were discouraged from participating from the start. Shielding citizens who will use and pay for this project from its planning process no doubt contributed to design and financing flaws. There is little

doubt it contributed to voters' rejection of this modest proposal to fund even a tiny fraction of the CRC's hefty \$3.5 billion price tag.

“We want this process to move forward, but it’s time for compromise. Rather than issue ultimatums over what Clark County residents must accept, the CRC must produce a design that can earn the support of communities that rely on the I-5 roadway and Columbia River. That is the only way this needed project will succeed.

“We know it cannot succeed without our support, and that what we’re proposing will take a lot of hard work. Thanks to this year’s national transportation bill, the federal government has the ability to pay its share of a new bridge. The state legislature has invested significant time and resources to bring transparency to the process, and to start re-earning the public’s trust. Once there is a project alternative that has the support of Clark County citizens, we will put all of our resources into making the bridge project a reality.”

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