

1           **Resolution in Support of a More Thorough Investigation of**  
2           **Anencephalic Birth Defect Cluster in Eastern Washington**

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4   **WHEREAS**, three Counties in Eastern Washington, (Yakima, Benton and Franklin), are  
5 the site of a serious cluster of anencephalic birth defects; and in 2013, the rate of  
6 anencephalic births was 11.1/10,000 births, approximately 5 times the U.S. rate of  
7 2.1/10,000; and in addition, these numbers only reflect the women who reached 37  
8 weeks of pregnancy or delivered; it does not reflect women who may have chosen to  
9 terminate the pregnancy upon learning that their baby had a serious, fatal birth defect;

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11 **WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Washington State  
12 Department of Health (DOH) have not reached a conclusion as to the cause of this  
13 extreme rise in birth defects in the Yakima, Benton, and Franklin Counties, and the  
14 DOH has stated on their website regarding the investigation, "Increases of unusual  
15 health conditions like this is concerning and difficult to investigate"; and "Birth defects  
16 study in south central WA is inconclusive – no common causes; Prevention advice for  
17 brain development disorder includes prenatal vitamin with folic acid";

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19 **WHEREAS**, the CDC and the DOH have not reached a conclusion regarding the cause  
20 of the anencephalic birth defect cluster, and have in the course of their investigation  
21 made a decision to not test the water or soil or foods of the affected families for  
22 contaminants; the DOH having made a decision to not test (or invite to test) the affected  
23 families for blood folate samples, despite folate deficiency being a main theory for cause  
24 the anencephalic birth defect cluster according to the DOH; and that there are no  
25 studies of folate deficiency in childbearing age women, planned for the three-County  
26 area;

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28 **WHEREAS**, the lower Yakima County area is known to have nitrate contamination in  
29 20% of wells, has been having elevated nitrates in air samples, and multiple studies  
30 have shown a link between nitrates and this same type of anencephalic birth defect  
31 rates; and Yakima County received funds to test wells, but chose only to test wells north  
32 of the Yakima River and declined to extend their free well testing program to any  
33 residents of the Yakama Nation area, an area with known nitrate contamination of  
34 wells;

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36 **WHEREAS**, the Yakima, Benton, and Franklin Counties are also near the Hanford  
37 nuclear reservation, another potential source of contamination of water;

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39 **WHEREAS** the World Health Organization has called nitrates a known mutagen which  
40 is a substance or agent that can induce or increase the frequency of genetic mutation;

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42 **WHEREAS** the Washington State DOH and the March of Dimes are recommending  
43 that all women in this area, who might potentially become pregnant, should take folic  
44 acid or folate, a B Vitamin that is known to reduce neural tube defects; and that both  
45 have said they are conducting a media campaign to increase awareness of this need for  
46 folate, in the three-county area; and that this awareness campaign has not been  
47 noticeable; and

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49 **WHEREAS** all peoples in Washington State have an inherent right to clean air, soil, food  
50 and water, free of contaminants that might cause anencephalic or other birth defects;  
51 and that correcting any deficiencies in this right is a matter of social justice and for the  
52 well-being of our babies and families;

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54 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Washington State Democratic Party urges all  
55 members of our State Legislature, Governor Jay Inslee, and the State Board of Health to  
56 require a more thorough investigation, under a special investigator, of the possible  
57 causes of this anencephalic birth defect cluster; that soil, water, and other possible  
58 causes be tested; and also require Washington State to set aside funds for a systematic  
59 and sustained awareness campaign regarding folic acid supplementation and well  
60 testing as a possible preventative effort; and also set aside funds for free well testing  
61 and remediation of contaminated wells which families rely on as a water source to  
62 sustain their daily lives in other county areas, including Yakama Nation area, not  
63 offering testing in the three-county region; and that these efforts continue until a root  
64 cause is discovered and solved.

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67 Submitted by the Yakima County Democrats to the WSDCC. (Date Submitted  
68 4/10/2015)

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70 The Resolutions Committee recommended that this resolution be "PASSED" at its April  
71 18, 2015 meeting in Pasco.

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73 The WSDCC "PASSED" this resolution at its April 18, 2015 meeting in Pasco.