2025 Greater Portland Champion Award Acceptance Speech:

At Westside Economic Alliance we bring together the private, public and non-profit sectors to realize a vibrant business environment by supporting business-centered economic opportunities that support a well-trained, well-paid workforce and healthy communities.

Since joining WEA, I've had the pleasure of working with business leaders and executives who continue to believe our region is worth investing in.

And I have the opportunity to work side by side with an extraordinary group of elected leaders at the state, regional and local level who agree that the time is now for us to embrace a growth model that reflects the realities of 2025, not the aspirations of 1975.

I recently wrote about what I call the "Culture of No" that I believe exists here in Oregon.

Let me give you an example: Just a few weeks ago we testified in support of a project – fully within the urban growth boundary - on land zoned for industrial development - where this organization already has a campus.

This expansion will add about 600 permanent jobs plus the 400-600 construction workers needed to finish the build out. The decision-making body in question received over 500 letters of opposition citing fears of increased traffic and noise.

In a region that tells us that any growth at the edges of the urban boundaries is bad, we are also being told that smart industrial infill is bad.

I have been waving the red flag, ringing the bell, whatever metaphor you prefer, for the past few years now. We have got to move past this default position we take of "no" to any sort of growth, infrastructure project, energy transition or expansion.

The stats we are hearing should alarm all of us:

- U of O & Business Oregon March 2025 Recruitment and Retention Report:
  - 26% of the 300+ surveyed businesses were approached by out-of-state recruitment organizations
  - 68% of that 26% moved or expanded out of Oregon
- 600 layoffs a month, a rate not seen since the great recession
- 11,000 jobs shed from July 2024 – July 2025 according to a recent report from the Employment Department

We have to bring our friends and neighbors along with us – we have to have a serious conversation with these folks about what modest growth means in the face of a shrinking workforce – and layout the very real dangers of what it means to continue the tactics of delay and obstruction.

And if you've heard me speak recently you've heard these numbers - but they bear repeating:

Our state's general fund is overly reliant on income tax. In the 2023-25 biennium our general fund consisted of 82% personal income tax and 11% corporate income tax … so 93% of our general fund, the most flex dollars we have as a state, is based on the success of our ability to provide jobs.

If we want to fund health & human services & K-12 Education - the largest recipients of those general fund dollars - we need to embrace a new way of thinking and talking about growth.

We need to leave behind the culture of 'no' and embrace the culture of 'now'.

To that end, I reject the false choice between economic growth and environmental stewardship.

I reject the false choice between industrial development and community well-being.

I believe our region is capable of doing hard things – and I believe that we can do more than one hard thing at a time.

What we need is strategic, forward-thinking policies and bold leadership willing to champion a future where prosperity and livability go hand in hand.

I look forward to continuing to lead this work in my part of the region – and look forward to our continued partnership with GPI and many of the businesses and partner organizations here today .

I am honored to receive this award today. Thank you.