

# TRI-CITIES AREA Journal of Business

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### HE SAID IT...

"We've put a lot of emphasis in increasing audits because it's critical to ensuring faith in the tax system."

-Mark W. Everson  
Commissioner  
Internal Revenue Service  
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## Non-profit aims to take integration of NW grid system to next level

By Karisa Saywers for TCAJoB

The high-voltage grid system that gathers energy from generating stations and transfers electricity to neighboring distribution facilities throughout the Northwest has a new addition—ColumbiaGrid.

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) worked with a number of utilities to develop ColumbiaGrid in an effort to support the progress and planned expansion of the Northwest (NW) transmission grid network.

John Kaake, president and chief executive officer of the non-profit ColumbiaGrid, said collaborative planning of operations for the Northwest transmission grid is necessary to support increasing power suppliers.

"The growth of new power suppliers, such as wind-generator farms and other independent power producers, has begun to impact the existing grid in unexpected ways," Kaake said. "Regional utilities recognize that a unified transmission planning approach to address these impacts is in the best interest of all."

Utility groups throughout the region have for a long time acknowledged the need for a highly integrated transmission network to improve capabilities, and the groups have made many attempts to create an organization that could unite utilities and collaborate planning and operations.

"It became apparent that mere coordination between various entities charged with controlling and constructing the grid would only go so far and that a dedicated and independent entity could take this integration to the next level," Kaake said.

ColumbiaGrid was formed to take on the task of managing cohesive transmission planning for utilities in the Northwest, and the organization has secured \$5 million for the first two years of corporate costs.

Local public utilities districts, the Benton PUD and Franklin PUD, said they support ColumbiaGrid's mission for unified transmission planning in the Northwest. However, both utility groups have opted to decline membership with the organization under the membership provisions as they currently stand, according to the comments made by Benton PUD and Franklin PUD managers.

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Ryan Laws and Angie Copenhaver started a new staffing company, ANR Group Inc., earlier this month. The partners hope to place 100 people in positions in the upcoming year.

## Layoffs prompt coworkers to venture out on their own to form new staffing company

By Pete M. Fretwell for TCAJoB

Angie Copenhaver once helped an engineer hurriedly dig a ditch for his underground sprinkler system before he left for a job assignment in Texas.

Ryan Laws mowed a client's lawn while the engineer was away on an overseas assignment.

Copenhaver and Laws were responsible for sending both engineers out of town. As trained "headhunters" they find jobs for people and people for jobs.

Personalized service is one way the duo plans to differentiate their new staffing company, ANR Group Inc., from other companies in the industry throughout the Northwest.

"I think we do go above and beyond, but we like what we do," Laws said. "Especially when you find an individual that has great skills, who we want to work for us, because it makes us look good to recruit that individual."

The partners believe personal relationships will remain the key to recruiting as they start work at their new Richland office. They plan to focus on providing technical staff for engineering and construction projects, but they also see a niche market in helping smaller companies find qualified workers.

"We do whatever we need to do to make sure our clients and our employees are taken care of," Copenhaver said.

Copenhaver started staffing work in the early '90s, and Laws was employed at a placement firm in Seattle until 2000 when he decided to return home to the Tri-Cities.

The two met while working together at SCM Staff Placement Specialists in Kennewick, and when Copenhaver and Laws were recently laid off, the coworkers decided to launch ANR Group.

Throughout their experience in the recruiting business, Copenhaver and Laws have found that quality of life, cost of living and outdoor recreational opportunities are strong selling points for the Tri-Cities.

"People come from all over the West Coast, and some are a bit nervous about coming here, and two weeks after they arrive, they're ranting and raving about how beautiful it is, the environment, the types of housing and all the things you can do here," Laws said.

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## Local doctors breathe sigh of relief after Congress delays 5 percent Medicare cut

By Jackie Lane for TCAJoB

Dec. 20 was a good day for most physicians. It was the day President George Bush signed legislation that prevents a 5 percent cut in Medicare payments to physicians in 2007. The bill sets aside other funds to help offset the projected payment cut.

"They just put it off for one year. They didn't eliminate it, so we have our work cut out for us," Dr. Richard Long said.

Dr. Long is a pathologist with 17 years of experience under his belt. He has an office practice in Richland, but spends most of his time at his primary practice at Lourdes Medical Center in Pasco. He is also the President of the Benton Franklin County Medical Society.

Dr. Long has been following the issue of

Medicare payment cuts for some time now. The American Medical Association said nearly one million people contacted Congress to urge them to take action on the proposed legislation to stop the cuts. On Dec. 9, the House approved the bill by a 367-45 vote and the Senate by a 79-9 vote.

According to the Washington State Medical Association, the cost of running a doctor's office has grown at a very fast rate for the past five years. However, what the government pays a doctor to care for Medicare patients hasn't grown at all during that time. Dr. Long said that's a cut to a physician's salary.

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