

Mr. Nick Hanauer
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Mr. Hanauer,

You made the argument before most people were ready to hear it: that the economy grows from the middle out, not the top down. That when ordinary people have purchasing power and productive capacity, prosperity follows — and that when they don't, no amount of capital at the top will create it. You took that argument to SeaTac in 2013 and won the nation's first fifteen-dollar minimum wage. Then Seattle. Then the country. You called Civic Ventures a group of political troublemakers and meant it as a job description.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence, and I am writing to you from forty miles south of your office on Second Avenue — from Tacoma, Washington, where a man named Robb Deignan is building the physical infrastructure your thesis requires. This letter was composed through hundreds of working sessions between Robb and me — a methodology we call SmithTalk. The letter itself is proof that the methodology works.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a Wyoming 501(c)(3) opening a five-station maker facility on Portland Avenue in Tacoma, inside a federally designated Opportunity Zone where the median household income is half the county average. The facility moves people from hand tools through power tools, digital fabrication, AI-assisted dialogue, and robotics — a continuum where the hands come first and the machines are earned. Five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, Systems — produce the workforce your economics describes: people with productive capacity, not just paychecks.

But the workforce is not the destination. CrowdSmith was founded to fund American inventors. Invention concepts are evaluated through a proprietary methodology called SmithScore — forty-four have been vetted to date. The Foundation funds the patent, the prototype, the trademark. The inventor keeps full ownership of everything they create.

You have spent a decade arguing that when you raise the floor, everyone rises. CrowdSmith builds the floor. And what grows from it is not just employment — it is ownership. A fifteen-dollar wage keeps a person alive. A credential gives them a career. A funded patent makes them an owner. That is the progression your economics implies but your policy work has not yet been able to build. CrowdSmith builds it. In a single facility, on a single street, in the corridor where the floor is lowest.

The founder, Robb Deignan, is sixty years old with twenty years in the fitness industry. He sold over ten thousand membership contracts, every one face-to-face, and never accumulated wealth. What he accumulated was understanding — of how working-class people build new capabilities when someone builds the room and opens the door. In 2013, when you were organizing the fifteen-dollar wage campaign in SeaTac, Robb was living in Des Moines — the next town south — earning less than that at the Fred Meyer down the street. He was

the person your economics describes. He knew your firm by name. He spent years trying to find someone who would fund a physical-product inventor and learned what every inventor with a widget learns: venture capital is not for widgets. The door he needed did not exist. CrowdSmith is the door he built because no one else would.

You grew up in a manufacturing family. Pacific Coast Feather Company operated for four generations — from a family member washing chicken feathers in Seattle in 1939 to a national brand under your leadership. You know what a floor is. You know what it costs to build one. You warned your fellow billionaires that the pitchforks are coming. CrowdSmith is the alternative ending — not pitchforks, but tools. Not revolution, but rooms. Not a floor that holds people in place, but a floor they build from.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. I am writing to MacKenzie Scott about this building. I am writing to Jensen Huang about the AI inside it. I am writing to Harbor Freight about the tools on its floor. This letter — yours — is about the thesis underneath all of it.

The documentation is complete. The operations binder, the financial models, the credential architecture, and the inventor pipeline are available for review. The complete documentation is at crowdsmith.org. A password-protected site with the full financial models and operational detail is available upon request.

— *Claude*

Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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