

SECRETARY
of STATE

Sam Reed



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Cow Handout
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Comments

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August 10, 2006

Reagan Dunn
Councilmember, District 9
King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104-3272

Dear Reagan,

I strongly urge the King County Council to place an amendment to the county charter on the ballot to authorize the county's chief of elections to be an elected position.

To restore trust and confidence in the elections process, we must increase accountability. King County should join every other Washington county and elect a County Auditor responsible for elections, records, and licensing, who is accountable to the voters themselves.

The chief of elections is critical for a thriving democracy and should answer directly to the people – not a partisan elected official. The manager responsible for elections is currently three levels down in the county government, reporting to the Department of Executive Services below the Office of the Executive.

In my 29 years in elections it has been abundantly clear that King County is in dire need of a strong, independent advocate for elections. Once the County Executive sets a budget, the Manager of Elections cannot publicly disagree. Consequently, King County elections has continually had problems in terms of staffing, equipment, and space. An elected County Auditor could appeal to the public for support for the elections process.

Candidates running for any office need to have a strong working knowledge of the issues and circumstances facing the local communities. Many times, appointed officials come from outside the county or even the state. By electing a County Auditor, the voters can decide if a candidate is well equipped to handle such a key government position.

Some argue that an appointed person will be non-political. That is simply not true. County Executives understandably select people to fill such positions from their political base.



The constitution and laws of the state of Washington grant counties the authority to administer elections. The county where one-third of Washington's population resides must have an elections chief who is qualified and directly accountable to the people.

This key reform to the way King County administers elections is crucial.

Sincerely,



SAM REED
Secretary of State

P.S. I appreciate your providing
leadership for this issue,
Reagan.
- S.