



Distributed @ 9-7-05 BFM mtg.
2005-0324

African American Veterans Group Of Washington State Inc.

Serving Those Who Have Served

September 2, 2005

Larry Gossett
King County Council
King County Courthouse
516 3rd Ave. – Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmember Gossett:

On behalf of the African American Veterans Group of Washington State, I would like to voice our strong opposition to proposed Ordinance 2005-0324, which would place a health and human services levy on this November's ballot that would benefit only veterans and their families.

I served in the United States Armed Forces, and I know there are a large number of veterans in King County who face homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse, and a variety of other problems for which funds are needed to provide them with proper assistance and support. It would be easy to be narrow-minded and selfish and advocate for VETERANS ONLY, because this ordinance would benefit my fellow veterans and their families. However, as a veteran, I understand the idea of sacrifice, and a dedicated soldier would never look out for only himself and his fellow soldiers. It is the people, our fellow countrymen, who must be protected and served first.

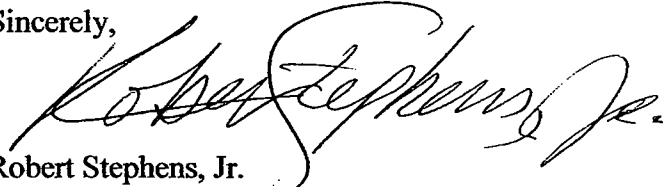
We believe this ordinance is insensitive and not inclusive of other needy families and individuals in King County. Because of this, the long term benefits of this policy will not be helpful to the well-being and health of the citizens in Martin Luther King Jr. County. We need to make sure that any policy that we support includes everyone in our community, rather than pitting us against thousands of other equally needy folks. Why don't we put a levy together that helps all the poor, not just veterans?

In addition, our County's Executive, Ron Sims has already convened the Healthy Families and Community Task Force, and given its members the responsibility of developing a *comprehensive* plan for finding a stable funding source to provide services for all those in need. Let it run its course.

Finally, as Black veterans, we are very cognizant that a disproportionate number of the poor in our County are African-Americans—and we do not want to separate ourselves and our families—away from other families and neighbors in our Black community.

Please do not pass this divisive and restrictive Veterans Only health and human services ordinance. It does not represent the interest of Black vets in King County. We do not want a separate peace from others in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Stephens, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Robert Stephens, Jr.
African American Veterans Group of WA

Cc: King County Councilmembers