



Legislation Text

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Clerk 03/11/2011

AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the qualified electors of King County at a special election to be held in King County on November 8, 2011, of a proposition to provide regional health and human services to residents of King County by renewing authorization of the veterans and human services property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, for a consecutive six year period at a rate of not more than \$0.05 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation, for the purpose of providing funding to enable the provision of health and human services such as affordable and supportive housing, mental health counseling, substance abuse prevention and treatment, employment assistance and other essential regional health and human services for residents of King County and establishing county citizen oversight boards to review and report on expenditures of levy proceeds, contingent on voter approval of the levy.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Findings:

A. To enhance the available funding for veterans and other human services in King County, the metropolitan King County council approved Ordinance 15279, placing a six-year veterans and human services levy on the ballot. In November 2005, the veterans and human services levy passed with nearly fifty-eight percent approval, generating much needed funding to help veterans, military personnel and their families and

other individuals and families in need across the county through a variety of regional health and human services.

B. The veterans and human services levy generates an average of \$14.6 million per year. One-half of these revenues are dedicated exclusively for veterans and their families and the remaining one-half is dedicated to other King County residents in need of human services. The levy remains in effect until December 31, 2011.

C. All activities supported by the levy advance one or more of three overarching policy goals:

1. Reducing homelessness;
2. Reducing emergency medical and criminal justice involvement; or
3. Increasing self-sufficiency for veterans, military personnel, their families and other individuals and families in need.

D. Since 2006, the veterans and human services levy has met these policy goals by:

1. Enrolling over one thousand seven hundred chronically homeless individuals in outreach services as a first milestone in ending homelessness. Of those helped, approximately eighteen percent are veterans and at least one hundred had been involved in the criminal justice system due to mental illness or co-occurring disorders;
2. Providing over four hundred homeless veterans with twenty-four thousand bed-nights of emergency shelter and transitional housing, coupled with case management and advocacy;
3. Expanding King County's existing veterans programs and adding one new program to serve over nine thousand military personnel, veterans and their families. These programs include: financial aid and emergency assistance for rent, food, utilities, medical needs and burial; employment services such as job placement, career counseling and job training; transportation; mental health counseling, including crisis and posttraumatic stress disorder counseling and intervention services; case management services for those needing housing, treatment or other assistance; long-term and short-term housing; treatment for trauma; homeless prevention; veterans' incarcerated prevention; and other programs;

4. Serving three hundred eighty veterans experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder with five thousand nine hundred thirty hours of levy-funded counseling in 2009 alone, with a demonstrated success rate of ninety-five percent of clients reducing posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms;

5. Assessing over ten thousand four hundred low-income persons for behavioral health issues. Of these persons, more than three thousand were indicated to have depression or anxiety symptoms and entered treatment by the end of 2009;

6. Treating one thousand primary care clients, including an estimated one hundred fifty veterans or their family members, successfully reducing their depression or anxiety symptoms and improving their long-term health prospects; and

7. Screening over seven thousand one hundred mothers for maternal depression. Of these, six hundred eighty-five received behavioral health treatment services, contributing to the healthy development of their children. Of those measured, sixty-eight percent have reduced depression or anxiety, or both, thereby improving the likelihood of their successful parenting and improved self sufficiency.

E. Although the veterans and human services levy is set to expire at the end of 2011, the need for veterans and human services remains high. Approximately one hundred thirty-nine thousand veterans live in King County representing over twenty percent of the state's veterans. The population of veterans in the state is growing and Washington ranks eighth nationwide for the total number of veterans in the state.

F. King County has a growing homeless population, estimated to be as many as eight thousand five hundred on any given night. Among these, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are as many as two thousand five hundred homeless veterans in the Puget Sound region.

G.. The current recession continues to challenge individuals and families throughout the region, as high unemployment and foreclosure rates increase the need for housing and supportive health and human services.

H. King County's current expense fund faces continuing challenges in future years, including anticipated shortfalls in 2012 and 2013 in excess of twenty million dollars each year. As a discretionary service

under state law, human service funding has been almost entirely eliminated and faces complete elimination in future years. At the state level, cuts to human services funding are anticipated to have devastating impacts on King County families in need.

I. Given the positive outcomes of the veterans and human services levy on the lives of veterans, military personnel, their families and other individuals and families in need, and the projected need for sustained veterans and human services funding in future, it is appropriate to ask the voters to renew the veterans and human services levy.

J. The current economic crisis has eroded property values causing jurisdictions to reach the limits of the authorized property tax rate under state law. As a result, any future increase in the veterans and human services levy rate would negatively affect the ability of other jurisdictions in King County to collect needed revenues for flood prevention, hospital maintenance and fire district operations. As such, it is appropriate to maintain the current rate of \$0.05 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation.

SECTION 2. Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this ordinance unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

A. "Family" means a veteran's or military personnel's spouse, domestic partner or child or the child of the spouse or domestic partner or other dependent relatives if living in the household of a veteran or military personnel.

B. "Human services for veterans" means services and projects of the King County veterans' program specifically developed to meet the needs of veterans, military personnel and their families in King County.

C. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes for the specific purpose and term provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in accordance with state law.

D. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of funds raised by the levy and any interest earnings on the funds.

E. "Military personnel" means those persons currently serving in a branch of the military, including the

National Guard and reservists for any branch of the military.

F. "Regional health and human services" means a range of services and related capital facilities, including housing, that meet basic human needs and promote safe and healthy communities including, but not limited to:

1. Prevention and early intervention services that reduce or prevent adverse human behaviors and social conditions that lead to crises, serious dysfunction or disability;
2. Criminal justice linked services that assist individuals and their families in avoiding or mitigating their involvement with the criminal justice system;
3. Crisis intervention services that address life threatening situations and other crises;
4. Rehabilitation and support services that provide treatment for individual and family problems or provide support to maintain or enhance their present level of independence.

G. "Veterans" mean those persons who have served in any branch of the military, including the National Guard and reservists for any branch of the military.

SECTION 3. Levy submittal to voters. To provide necessary funds for the provision of regional health and human services to King County's veterans, military personnel and their families and other residents in need of health and human services, the county council shall submit to the qualified electors of the county a proposition reauthorizing a regular property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for six consecutive years, commencing in 2011, with collection beginning in 2012, at a rate not to exceed five cents per one thousand dollars of assessed value. In accordance with RCW 84.55.050, this levy shall be a regular property tax levy, which is subject to the statutory rate limit of RCW 84.52.043

SECTION 4. Deposit of levy proceeds. The levy proceeds shall be deposited in two special revenue funds, which funds shall be specified by ordinance. The levy proceeds shall be divided to place fifty percent of the levy proceeds in one fund designated for the provision of regional health and human services for veterans, military personnel and their families. The remaining fifty percent of the levy proceeds shall be placed in

another fund designated for the provision of regional health and human services to a wide range of people in need of such services.

SECTION 5. Eligible expenditures. If approved by the qualified electors of the county, all levy proceeds shall be used to pay the costs associated with provision of regional health and human services to a wide range of people in need of such services, including, but not limited to, services that increase self-sufficiency for veterans, military personnel and their families, services that reduce involvement in the criminal justice system, services that reduce emergency medical costs, services for children and youth, the elderly, the unemployed and underemployed and for services specific to veterans' needs such as treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder and specialized employment assistance. The provision of services will include a range of regional health and human services and related capital facilities including, but not limited to, housing assistance, homelessness prevention, mental health counseling substance abuse prevention and treatment and employment assistance.

Eligible expenditures shall also include payment of costs to strengthen and improve the health and human services system and infrastructure to provide greater access to services and engender better coordination and integration of regional health and human services addressing the needs of veterans, military personnel and their families.

SECTION 6. Call for special election. In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321, it is hereby deemed that an emergency exists requiring the submission to the qualified electors of the county at a special election to be held on November 8, 2011, a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy for the purposes described in this ordinance. The director of the elections department shall cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at the said special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that proposition to the director of the elections department, in substantially the following form, with such additions, deletions or modifications as may be required for the proposition listed below by the prosecuting attorney:

PROPOSITION ___: The King County council has passed Ordinance _____ concerning funding for regional veterans, health, and human services. This proposition would replace an expiring levy and fund services and capital facilities that reduce medical costs, homelessness, and criminal justice system involvement and increase self-sufficiency. Half of the proceeds shall solely support veterans, military personnel and their families. It would reauthorize King County to levy an additional property tax of 5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for six consecutive years with collection beginning in 2012 in accordance with RCW 84.55. Should this proposition be:

Approved? _____

Rejected? _____

SECTION 7. County citizen oversight boards established. If the levy is reapproved by the voters, the oversight boards established by Ordinance 15279 shall be continued and the criteria identified for board membership shall be maintained.

SECTION 8. Ratification. Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the county council to the director of the elections department in accordance with law before the election on November 8, 2011, and any other act consistent with the authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and confirmed.

SECTION 9. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.