



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 2005-0383, **Version:** 1

---

Clerk 09/08/2005

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 7, 2006, of a proposition to provide regional health and human services to residents of King County by authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, at a rate of not more than \$0.082 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation, for the purpose of providing funding to enable the provision of health and human services such as 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 a county regional human service board 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. The metropolitan King County council by Ordinance 13629 in September 1999 adopted a framework of policies for human services and guidelines for implementing those policies. In September 2003, the metropolitan King County council by Motion 11820 adopted the report of the King County general government budget advisory task force, including that body's recommendation to develop long-term funding plans for human services and parks, clearly delineating regional and local roles. In August 2004, the task force on regional human services issued their final report entitled Stand Together: A Blueprint for Transforming

Human Services in King County. That report noted that a new stable funding source, via ballot measure, is needed for human services.

B. The task force on regional human services report outlined five community goals that have been adopted by United Way, King County, Seattle, Bellevue and the South King County Human Services Forum.

The five goals are:

1. Food to eat and a roof overhead;
2. Supportive relationships within families, neighborhoods and communities;
3. Safe haven from all forms of violence and abuse;
4. Health care to be as physically and mentally fit as possible; and
5. Education and job skills to lead an independent life.

C. The task force on regional human services recommended that an interim body be convened to address the following next steps: recommend the amount of financing needed; recommend a new funding source, a ballot measure; and work with others to develop a strong public education plan. The King County executive in July 2005 formed the healthy families and communities task force to address the next steps identified by the task force on regional human services.

D. In 2004, King County was among only a handful of large areas across the nation where pay dropped and poverty rates jumped. A U.S. Census Bureau annual survey outlined a Seattle-area economy that was out of step with the nation last year where the poverty rate jumped from 7.3 percent of county residents living in poverty to 10.4 percent, with approximately 187,000 people living in poverty, and where median income dropped to \$55,114 in 2004 from \$56,881 the previous year.

E. The Puget Sound region has a growing homeless population, estimated to be as many as 8,000 on any given night. Many factors contribute to the problem of homelessness. Unemployment, chemical and substance abuse and mental illness are prominent among them. In addition to homelessness, thousands of citizens in King County are in need of services with regard to such conditions as mental illness, substance

abuse, domestic violence, aging, developmental disabilities and repeated incarceration. While funding sources exist for many services that are mandated by the state, such as mental health services alcoholism/substance abuse and veterans services, King County has provided funding from local sources for discretionary services, such as homelessness and low income housing, employment assistance, after-school and tutoring services, child care and family support, maternal and pediatric health, teen parent training and support, services for domestic violence victims, treatment for sexually abused children, youth emergency shelters, early childhood and family support and community-based youth violence prevention programs.

F. Annexations and incorporations, economic recessions and unemployment, and tax limiting initiatives have contributed to a structural gap between the county's revenues and expenditures. The metropolitan King County council over the last several years has adopted a number of long-range policies that prioritize competing needs while addressing this structural gap. Over the past four years the council has cut over \$100 million from the general fund in order to address this structural gap. The structural gap still exists and will continue to apply pressure on the county to find ways to pay for mandated and discretionary services. Funding for discretionary human services comes primarily from the county's general fund. A portion of the county's general property tax levy, under chapter 73.08 RCW, titled "Veterans' Relief," is devoted exclusively to services for veterans. However, this levy is insufficient in meeting the needs of veterans.

G. At the same time that funding for discretionary human services is in jeopardy, the population of veterans in the state is growing, along with the human service needs of this sector of the population. Approximately 180,900 veterans live in King County representing twenty-seven percent of the state's veterans and Washington ranks twelfth nationwide for the total number of veterans in the state.

H. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, despite statutory requirements and annual increases in the Veterans Health Administration budget each year, Veterans Health Administration spending on mental health and addiction services has declined by eight percent over the past seven years, and by twenty-five percent when adjusted for inflation.

I. The Veterans Health Administration reports that, since the start of war in Iraq in March 2003, more than 26,000 men and women in the military have applied for benefits nationwide. Fully a third of those claims have still not been processed.

J. The county's current expense fund faces continuing challenges in future years, including anticipated shortfalls in 2006 and 2007 in excess of \$11 million each year. As a discretionary service under state law, human service funding is threatened with significant additional cuts if it remains reliant primarily on current expense funding.

K. With the continuing structural gap and anticipated budget shortfalls, implementation of the task force on regional human services' recommendation to find a new funding source for human services for all King County residents, including veterans, has become a necessity.

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

A. "Board" means the regional human services board established under section 8 of this ordinance.

B. "Family" means a spouse, domestic partner or child, or the child of the spouse or domestic partner, or other dependent relatives if living in the household.

C. "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.

D. "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.

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

F. "Military personnel" mean those persons currently serving in a branch of the military, including the National Guard and reservists for any branch of the military.

G. "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 avoid or mitigate their involvement with the justice system;
3. Crisis intervention services that address life threatening situations and other crises; and
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.

H. "Task force" means the healthy families and communities task force.

I.1. "Veteran" includes every person, who at the time he or she seeks benefits under this ordinance has received an honorable discharge or received a discharge for physical reasons with an honorable record and who meets at least one of the following criteria:

a. The person has served between World War I and World War II or during any period of war, as defined in subsection G.2. of this section, as either:

- (1) a member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States;
- (2) a member of the women's air forces service pilots;
- (3) a United States-documented merchant mariner with service aboard an oceangoing vessel operated by the war shipping administration, the office of defense transportation, or their agents, from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946; or
- (4) a civil service crewmember with service aboard a United States Army transport service or United States naval transportation service vessel in oceangoing service from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946; or

b. The person has received the armed forces expeditionary medal, or marine corps and navy

expeditionary medal, for opposed action on foreign soil, for service:

- (1) in any branch of the armed forces of the United States; or
- (2) as a member of the women's air forces service pilots.

2. For the purposes of this subsection I, a "period of war" includes:

- (a) World War I;
- (b) World War II;
- (c) The Korean conflict;
- (d) The Vietnam era, which means:

(i) the period beginning on February 28, 1961, and ending on May 7, 1975, in the case of a veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; or

(ii) the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending on May 7, 1975;

(e) The Persian Gulf War, which was the period beginning August 2, 1990, and ending on the date prescribed by presidential proclamation or law;

(f) The period beginning on the date of any future declaration of war by the congress and ending on the date prescribed by presidential proclamation or concurrent resolution of the congress; and

(g) The following armed conflicts, if the participant was awarded the respective campaign badge or medal: the crisis in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada; Panama, Operation Just Cause; Somalia, Operation Restore Hope; Haiti, Operation Uphold Democracy; and Bosnia, Operation Joint Endeavor, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Noble Eagle.

**SECTION 3. Levy submittal to voters.** To provide necessary funds for the provision of regional health and human services to King County's citizens, the county council shall submit to the qualified electors of the county a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, commencing in 2006, with collection beginning in 2007, at a rate not to exceed eight and two-tenth 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 a special revenue fund, which fund shall be created by ordinance.

**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 the provision of regional health and human services to a wide range of low-income people in need of such services, including, but not limited to, services for veterans, military personnel and their families, 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 regional health and human services will also 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.

**SECTION 6. Healthy families and communities task force - duties.** The healthy families and communities task force shall continue with its efforts to identify the depth of the human services needs, and the amount of funding needed and develop a public education program. The task force shall by April 2006 identify and recommend to the council priorities within the five goals to be funded by the levy proceeds.

**SECTION 7. 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 7, 2006, a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy for the purposes described in this ordinance. The director of the records, elections and licensing services division 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 records, elections and licensing services division, 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 health and human services. This proposition would fund health and human services for those in critical need of assistance and help, to include targeted veterans, children and youth, elderly, unemployed and underemployed, homeless, immigrants and other members of the general public. The kind of services to be funded will include, but not be limited to, housing assistance, mental health counseling, substance abuse prevention and treatment, employment assistance, capital facilities, and improved access to and coordination of services. It would authorize King County to levy an additional regular property tax of 8.2 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2007 and increase the levy each year thereafter as allowed by chapter 84.55 RCW. Should this proposition be:

Approved? \_\_\_\_\_

Rejected? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 8. Regional human service board established.** If the levy is approved by the voters in accordance with section 6 of this ordinance, a regional human service board shall be established. The board shall consist of fifteen members, to be appointed by the executive on or after January 15, 2006. Three members appointed by the executive shall be representatives of veterans or veterans organizations. Each councilmember shall nominate a representative from the councilmember's district. If the executive does not appoint a person who has been nominated by a councilmember from each district, the executive must request that the councilmember or councilmembers representing the district or districts in which the executive has not appointed a person nominated by the councilmember, nominate another candidate for appointment. Finally, the executive shall nominate three at-large representatives to this board who are poor or represent an organization that is composed of the poor, (such as Welfare Rights, Retired Senior Citizens, Seattle Young People Project,



etc.). Board members shall be confirmed by the council. Members shall be residents of King County with a diverse, balanced representation of private and public sectors, veterans, community leaders, jurisdictions, and human service representatives. The board will act as an ongoing countywide planning, prioritizing, evaluating, and advisory body that builds on and integrates the use of existing capacities . Terms and other governance policies shall be set by ordinance using the task force on regional human services report and recommendations as a guide. On or before June 1 of each year beginning in the year 2008, the board shall review and report to the King County executive and the King County council on the expenditure of levy proceeds.

**SECTION 9. Ratification.** Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the county council to the director of the records and elections and licensing services division in accordance with law before the election on November 7, 2006, and any other act consistent with the authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and confirmed.

**SECTION 10. 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.

none