

Legislation Text

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Clerk 06/16/2011

AN ORDINANCE proposing an amendment to the King County Charter; establishing as the county's paramount duty to seek to fund open and free elections, the fair and transparent assessment of real and personal property, the effective management of county government, an effective social safety net of regional human services and effective oversight of county government, and requiring the county to establish by ordinance such levels of service as it deems appropriate to provide a well-functioning county government; adding a new Section 805 to the King County Charter; and submitting the same to the voters of the county for their ratification or rejection at the November 8, 2011, general election.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Findings:

A. The principal goals of county government, as set forth in the King County strategic plan, adopted by the county council in July 2010, are to deliver justice and safety; health and human potential; economic growth and built environment; and environmental sustainability to county residents, and to do so in a manner that reflects service excellence, financial stewardship, public engagement and a quality workforce.

B. In times of economic scarcity, county government may lack sufficient resources to achieve all of these goals and therefore may need to establish priorities among them.

C. Since it is difficult, if not impossible, to enjoy the benefits of living in a democratic society without

assurances to the public that free and open elections are conducted on their behalf, the adequate funding of an effective elections department is of paramount importance.

D. The ten leading causes of death in King County from 2003 through 2007 included seven health-related causes: cancer, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia. In addition, based on a 2004 national study, Public Health-Seattle & King County estimates that the most prevalent actual causes of death include tobacco use; poor diet and physical inactivity; infectious diseases; toxic agents, such as second-hand smoke and food contamination; and sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. This relationship between health and mortality in King County underscores the importance of maintaining a vital public health system in our region. As such, the adequate funding of an effective public health system is of paramount importance.

E. The demand for human service programs are rising as King County residents suffer from record breaking numbers of unemployment and foreclosures, and growing numbers of substance abuse and mental health needs. Despite these facts, most human services are not mandated by state law and the majority of funding for these programs from the county's general fund has been cut. These cuts cost lives, increase costs for public safety, while increasing suffering and decreasing the quality of life for residents of King County. As such, the adequate funding of an effective social safety net is of paramount importance.

F. Article VII of the Washington State Constitution requires that all real and personal property be taxed equally based upon its value. In order to assure that this constitutional requirement is met, the adequate funding of a county assessor is necessary to assure fairness in the taxation of property. As such, the adequate funding of an effective county assessor is of paramount importance.

G. To achieve financial stewardship, public engagement and service excellence requires effective, transparent and professional management. As such the adequate funding of staff and resources for the county executive's management of King County is of paramount importance.

H. Maintaining the public's trust of county government is not possible without effective and public

oversight and policy making. As such, the adequate funding of staff and resources for the county council is of paramount importance.

SECTION 2. There shall be submitted to the voters of King County for their approval and ratification or rejection, at the next general election to be held in this county occurring more than forty-five days after the enactment of this ordinance, the addition of a new Section 805 to the King County Charter to read as follows:

Section 805. Paramount Duty of the County.

It is the paramount duty of the county to provide effective management and provision of all services required by law. To further these aims, the county shall seek to provide effective assessment, elections, management, oversight, public health and social safety net programs by making ample provision for these services. The county shall adopt appropriations ordinances establishing such levels of service as it deems appropriate to provide effective management and provision of required services. This section is intended neither to protect any particular class of individuals or organizations, nor to guarantee any specific level of funding, nor to create any private or public right of action.

SECTION 3. The clerk of the council shall certify the proposition to the elections director, in substantially the following form, with such additions, deletions or modifications as may be required by the prosecuting attorney:

Shall the King County Charter be amended to establish the effective provision of public health,
human services, elections, assessment,
management, oversight and other services required by law as the paramount duty of King
County?