



**Snohomish County**  
**County Executive's Office**

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**Aaron Reardon**  
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## **Reardon lauds County Council for endorsing his budget initiative**

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*Snohomish County Executive says groundwork for priority-based budget initiative already being laid, welcomes bi-partisan support*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today lauded Snohomish County Council members for giving their bi-partisan support to his plan to create a priority-based budget for 2005.

“The County Council’s endorsement of my priority-based budgeting plan is recognition that we can work together to break old political habits,” Reardon said. “I did challenge the County Council on priority-based budgeting in my State of the County address and their response is gratifying. My administration has been laying the groundwork for the plan since the day we took office and we welcome their support.”

Reardon noted that the priority-based budgeting process, which offers a top-to-bottom review of everything County government does, starts by focusing not on last year’s spending but on results that citizens want from government. That will be particularly important in 2005, he said, because the County anticipates closing a \$16.8 million deficit next year.

“We simply can’t continue to do business as usual at Snohomish County,” Reardon said. “We have a new jail we must open and it would not be fiscally prudent to write a 2005 budget based on assumptions such as savings from efficiencies, reduced administrative overhead and a property tax increase.

“Closing that \$16.8 million deficit will demand leadership and we’re already working on solutions.”

Earlier this month Reardon personally invited County Council members to meet with Peter Hutchinson, a Minneapolis-based consultant who helped the State of Washington with a priority-based budget last year. Snohomish County is the first local government in Washington state – and one of just a handful in the nation - to embark on a priority-based budget effort.

(more)

Hutchinson and other members of his Public Strategies Group have been working with Reardon, Executive Office staff and the Financial Department's budget team to set the stage for Snohomish County's priority-based budget. Hutchinson has also met during the past month with other Snohomish County elected officials to explain how a priority-based budget is put together and what they should expect from the budget process.

Reardon's effort to bring priority-based budgeting to Snohomish County earned the backing of several important groups in January. The Washington Roundtable, whose members include the state's largest home-based corporations; the Association of Washington Business; and the Washington Research Council have all endorsed Snohomish County's process.

Priority-based budgeting at the state level was credited with closing a \$2.4 billion deficit and its advocates are anxious to see the process succeed with local governments such as Snohomish County.

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