



**Snohomish County
County Executive's Office**

For immediate release – Tuesday, August 30, 2005

Aaron Reardon

County Executive

M/S #407

3000 Rockefeller Avenue

Everett, WA 98201

(425) 388-3460

FAX (425) 388-3434

county.executive@co.snohomish.wa.us

www.co.snohomish.wa.us

Executive Reardon calls for a citizen referendum on County elections process

--

*Voters should have the opportunity to decide how
County elections are held in the future, Reardon says*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today requested that the County Council adopt a resolution letting the voters decide the future of the County's elections process.

Executive Reardon urged the County Council to take swift action authorizing a referendum to the voters in November. The deadline to submit measures to the County Auditor for inclusion on the November ballot is September 23.

In a memorandum sent on Tuesday to the County Council, Executive Reardon wrote:

“The County Council is considering how Snohomish County voting will occur in the future. The Council has heard various viewpoints through citizen testimony. In addition, the Council has received presentations from County Auditor Bob Terwilliger who has the legal responsibility to conduct Snohomish County elections. In the process of developing the 2006 budget, Mr. Terwilliger sent me a summary of the options and cost of election methods. I requested he share his memo to me with the Council, which he did yesterday.

“The County has two choices. One choice is maintaining polling place voting with the purchase of new equipment required by law (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail “VVPAT”). The second choice is to adopt a vote by mail system.

“I have always been a poll voter. I enjoy the civic engagement of going to the polls. However, the expenditure necessary to maintain polling place voting is not justifiable. “The initial cost is in excess of one million dollars to acquire the additional equipment.

The on-going operational costs are projected at \$653,800 per year. These costs would be incurred by all Snohomish County taxpayers even though almost 70% of Snohomish County voters already vote by mail. Most of these expenses will be avoided if the County adopts a vote by mail system.

“The Council has considered appropriating sums this year to acquire the VVPAT machines. Yesterday, the Auditor’s Office received confirmation from the Secretary of State’s Office that these machines will not be certified as acceptable for use until after the first of the year. It is not prudent to make this large capital expenditure without State certification.

“The County should use this opportunity to allow the voters to decide how they would like to vote. All the members of the Council and I have stated our respective positions. But what we are talking about here will impact the fundamental right of every citizen in a democracy: the right to vote. The County will be conducting a general election this November. Including a referendum on this issue on the November ballot will allow voters the opportunity to make a timely decision on the election process. Only the Council can submit a referendum to the public for their vote on this issue. If the Auditor receives such a resolution by September 23, this can be included in the November ballot.

“To that end, I urge you pass such a resolution. If I or my office can be of any assistance, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

“Thank you.

##

For additional information, please contact:

Steve Smith
Executive Analyst
Snohomish County
(425) 388-3783
sr.smith@co.snohomish.wa.us