



**Snohomish County
County Executive's Office**

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Aaron Reardon
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Budget woes behind County, Reardon sets aggressive agenda

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Executive vows to continue County government's transformation

LYNNWOOD - A County budget that's back on track and in the black, a sharp focus on job creation, a new entrepreneurialism that's saving taxpayer dollars and greater emphasis on community security.

Those were the themes of Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon's 2005 State of the County address, in which he also announced the launch of a new anti-meth initiative. It's aim? To get businesses to voluntarily restrict access to a key ingredient needed to cook the lethal drug.

(Click on [State of the County](#) for a text of the speech)

The County is far better off this year than in 2004 because of tough measures taken to close a \$16 million plus budget gap, Executive Reardon said.

"We are poised to make great gains," Executive Reardon told members of the Snohomish County Council, County-wide elected officials and a gathering of the South Snohomish County Chamber of Commerce.

"We are building for the future because we stepped up and made the difficult but necessary decisions when they were needed most. The state of our County is good – and it is only going to get better."

Executive Reardon noted that the 2004 budget gap was closed without raising taxes. In order to avoid future program cuts or tax increases, the County must embark on a focused

effort to increase jobs in partnership with the private sector, he said. Executive Reardon outlined several steps he intends to take to grow the County's tax base and economy, including:

- Leading a delegation of local small business owners to the Tri-Cities in Eastern Washington to meet with industry leaders on the clean-up of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.
- Promoting the fortunes of Snohomish County's vibrant small businesses, particularly those owned and operated by minorities and women. He cited his invitation to Kiewit Pacific Co., one of North America's largest construction companies, to meet this week with local minority- and women-owned firms to explore subcontracting opportunities on state contracts.
- Creation of a four-year public university in Snohomish County, one that links curriculum directly to the community and marketplace.
- Promotion of an "aerospace hub" around Paine Field that would leverage existing assets such as The Boeing Co; Goodrich; The Future of Flight Museum and the new Hilton Garden Inn to recruit new suppliers and manufacturers. He cited the recent decision by Messier-Bugatti, a Paris-based subsidiary of the Snecma Group jet-engine and aviation-equipment conglomerate, to lease space in a building near Boeing's Everett plant.
- Releasing a Snohomish County Agriculture Action Plan later this month that will address farm regulation reform, economic development in the agriculture sector, cultural heritage, outreach and education.
- Developing a new partnership with Snohomish County cities to promote the economic and social health of their core downtown areas. Saying "our interests are mutual, not mutually exclusive," the County Executive pledged to work with mayors and their economic development directors to enhance the quality of life in local communities.
- Creation of a new interdepartmental Economic Development Team within County government to promote jobs and regulatory reform. The team is aimed at boosting efforts already underway in the private sector.

Executive Reardon said his administration also is initiating changes in the public safety and community security arenas.

He announced an anti-methamphetamine initiative aimed at voluntarily restricting access to over-the-counter cold remedies that contain pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient needed to cook meth. Several companies and retail organizations – including state associations representing grocery stores and pharmacies – have already agreed to embrace the County Executive's proposal.

A recent study found that 35 percent of all criminal cases in the County court system were methamphetamine related. Between 2001 and 2004, 321 meth labs were shut down by local law enforcement agencies.

County Executive Reardon said the County will soon have a significant new tool to improve safety for domestic violence victims – a Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) program. VINE automatically notifies domestic violence victims of the release, transfer or escape of an offender from incarceration. By registering a contact telephone number with VINE, a victim will be called immediately if an offender's status changes.

The County will establish a new Department of Community Security and Emergency Management to manage and allocate federal Homeland Security dollars more efficiently, County Executive Reardon said. The new department will replace the existing Department of Emergency Management.

Executive Reardon also vowed to continue his administration's transformation of County government. He pointed to several projects that will make the County even more efficient, entrepreneurial and accountable in 2005 and coming years. The first is completion of the County's Campus Redevelopment Initiative, which will save a minimum \$2.8 million in lease payments each year.

"Those savings are paying for the campus renovation," Executive Reardon said.

The Executive noted that Snohomish County was named one of the nation's top-10 tech savvy County governments last year. He credited the County's Department of Information Services for saving \$175,000 last year merely by managing unwanted SPAM e-mail. More impressively, use of web applications and expanded wireless communications reduced costs by more than \$2 million.

Executive Reardon also praised Department of Corrections officials who put together a regional business plan to pay for the County's expanded jail. The plan generates enough new revenues that it covers 65 percent of the facility's operating costs. At the plan's heart are new contracts in which the County agrees to house a minimum of 200 state prisoners for an estimated \$5.5 million.

"This is exactly the sort of entrepreneurial, outside-the-box thinking we want to encourage in our County," said Executive Reardon, who added the state also saves money because it is no longer shipping prisoners to Colorado and Nevada.

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