

Media Advisory – Aug. 13, 2008

Contact: Christopher Schwarzen

Office: 425-388-3883

Email: Christopher.Schwarzen@snoco.org

Reardon: Council hiring freeze welcome but late *New steps cancel efforts Executive requested in June*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon welcomed Wednesday's hiring freeze passed by the County Council but criticized members for not taking action sooner.

The Council ordinance follows steps enacted in June by the Executive's Office and Finance Department to stop county hiring. Since then, the Executive's Office has been successful in keeping open more than 160 county positions, saving money to make up a projected \$9 million revenue shortfall.

"I'm glad they now see the need for a hiring freeze, but they could have come alongside this office in June when we asked for their support," Reardon said. "We've spoken for months about the importance of freezing positions and shoring up finances for next year's budget. Wednesday's council action comes a little late."

On June 29, the Finance Department ordered county departments to gain its approval first for new positions. The County Council moved such authority from the Executive's Office to the Finance Department in 2007. Finance has mostly limited its approval of new hires to uniformed officers.

Reardon followed the Finance Department's steps July 25 with an Executive Order, which also put a stop to out-of-state travel, multiple county employees attending the same conference and other cost-saving steps.

The emergency ordinance passed Wednesday by Council weakens the hiring freeze and many of the cost-saving steps initiated by Reardon.

It also fails to take into account new staff positions created by the Council after the Finance Department requested a hiring freeze. Council overrode Reardon's veto of a funding package to create four new Council analyst positions, three of which were filled this summer.

"I would like to think the Council is serious about its efforts to curb county spending, but it's hard to see that based on previous actions," Reardon said. "I hope today's decision is a step toward the direction the Executive's Office already is taking."

###