



**Snohomish County**  
**Office of the Executive**  
**Aaron Reardon**  
*County Executive*

## **Media Advisory – February 27, 2008**

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### **County approves inclusion manager position**

Snohomish County will hire an inclusion manager this spring, following more than a year's debate at the council level on the merits of the position.

County Executive Aaron Reardon applauded Wednesday's council decision to approve the position, which will be used to increase diversity of the county workforce and improve fair access to all county services.

"We asked for the position in 2006, and the majority of council then didn't believe it was necessary," Reardon said Wednesday following the vote affirming the position. "This council, however, shares our belief that government should reflect the people we serve."

Today, people of color make up more than 20 percent of Snohomish County's population, yet that percentage within Snohomish County government is less than 10 percent.

"We are a nation of immigrants and what we do as a nation is bring people together," said Councilman Dave Gossett, sponsor of the new proposal. "Adding an inclusion manager is a major step in doing here what this country is all about."

The role of the inclusion manager will be to strategically focus the county's actions to ensure that everyone who lives in Snohomish County has fair access to services and that they have an equal opportunity to contribute to the county's services as employees or volunteers.

"For our county to continue to prosper, we need to attract talented people. To do so, we must embrace our diversity to succeed," said Council Chairman Dave Somers. "The inclusion manager's role is simply to let people know that all doors are open to everyone."

More than 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies have diversity and inclusion initiatives or have developed custom programs to improve productivity and competitiveness.

Research has shown that diversified candidates will eliminate companies from consideration if they lack ethnic or gender diversity.

"As our county continues to grow, so too will the diversity of our residents," Reardon said. "We must foster an inclusive environment that ensures all residents of our county –

regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, religion or economic standing – have equal access to our government.”

Equally, organizations that fail to demonstrate a commitment to diversity in upper management have been shown to lose a significant number of their diversity hires to organizations with more obvious advancement opportunities.

“We’ve made a lot of progress toward being an inclusive community in my lifetime, but we’re not there yet,” said Councilman Mike Cooper. “This is a positive step for the county to take.”

Added Councilman Brian Sullivan, referring to the morning meeting where the vote was taken to approve the position, “As one speaker today said, ‘Inclusion means everyone,’ and that’s what hiring an inclusion manager is all about: everyone.”

The measure passed 4-1 with Councilman John Koster opposing. Koster said he could not approve a new position with fears of a recession ahead.

“We have a fiduciary responsibility to county taxpayers, and with the economy at risk, we simply can’t afford this position,” he said.

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