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## Reardon promises to break “old political habits” with new Snohomish County initiatives

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### *PRIORITIES-BASED BUDGETING, USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND NEW BUSINESS PLAN HIGHLIGHT SNOHOMISH COUNTY EXECUTIVE’S VISION*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today outlined new initiatives to break old political habits, setting the foundation for his administration’s first year and beyond.

In his “State of the County” address to the Snohomish County Council, Reardon challenged County government to foster change by using:

- A priorities-based budget initiative that focuses on results, not a spending level set by the previous year’s budget;
- SnoStat, a data-driven accountability system – accessible to citizens on the Internet – that will allow the County to constantly measure the performance, and benchmark the progress of its departments; and,
- A business plan that will be institutionalized within County codes so the government’s regulatory climate can be constantly measured.

Reardon’s aim, he told the County Council, is to create in Snohomish County the most effective service delivery system that the nation has seen.

“Over the next 11 months, my administration will create the foundation on which successes will be built, decisions will be made and government performance will be measured,” Reardon said.

“We will break old political habits by saying there can no longer be something for nothing. We will work to provide our citizens with the information they seek by instituting a transparent system of measurements and benchmarks. And, we will develop a comprehensive business plan that will help our County plan for the future and provide opportunities for all our citizens.”

**Priorities-based budgeting**

The difference between the County's old budget process and priorities-based budgeting is dramatic, Reardon told the Council. The new approach starts from the ground up rather than using the previous year's budget as a starting point. The focus is no longer where to cut a budget because the process is starting from scratch. The focus is how to pay for services that people want and government is committed to providing.

Reardon acknowledged that revenue trend lines for Snohomish County for 2005 and beyond are, at best, static and could fall. Those trends mean tough budget decisions are ahead, he said. The County must reprioritize spending, eliminate programs or consolidate redundant activities being carried out by different arms of government.

"Now, I am not saying this will be easy," Reardon said. "But it is the right way to do business. And, the citizens of our County have made it clear that they want us to focus on priorities, outcomes and results. And we will."

### **Accountability**

Reardon reaffirmed a theme he first introduced in his inaugural address: "Accountability will be our credo."

The County Executive announced that Snohomish County citizens would soon be able to track data and information on a new system called SnoStat, which will be modeled after similar systems in Baltimore and New York City. The system will be used at all levels of County government, Reardon said, and will constantly update data, measure performance and benchmark progress in meeting goals.

"In short, we will move away from the post-World War II industrial model of government and shift the focus from departments to networks and the effective use of information technologies," Reardon told the Council. "To change the way the public perceives their civic institutions, we must change the way our civic institutions operate. That is why my administration is moving aggressively towards data-driven government performance."

### **A business plan**

Reardon told County Council members that his administration will produce a business plan aimed at creating jobs and driving down an unemployment rate that hovers above 7 percent in Snohomish County. He said when the plan is finished he wants it reflected in County codes so that an ongoing measure of the regulatory climate occurs.

"Without a plan, we cannot legitimately say that we in government are doing our job to equip our citizens with the tools they needed to succeed," Reardon said. "Snohomish County needs a business plan – one that is institutionalized and one that is constantly measured against the actions of both my office" and the County Council.

Reardon also announced the creation of a Citizen's Cabinet – with members taken from a broad cross-section of the County – to aid in the development of the business plan.

*(For more information on Snohomish County Executive Reardon's Citizens Cabinet, see [Snohomish County Executive names Citizens Cabinet](#). More information on members of the Citizens Cabinet, will be posted shortly at the [Executive Information](#) web site.)*

In addition to the longer-range economic development efforts represented by the business plan and the Citizens Cabinet, Reardon also announced that he and Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson would be in Washington, D.C., starting on Wednesday, February 5 to meet with the Washington state Congressional delegation and Pentagon officials about Naval Station Everett.

The purpose of the joint Everett-Snohomish County mission is to introduce both Reardon and Stephanson to federal officials in anticipation of the next round of deliberations by the Base Closure and Re-alignment Commission.

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