



Snohomish County

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Reardon, Stephanson on “joint mission” to Washington, D.C.

*Snohomish County Executive, Everett Mayor to meet with state Congressional delegation,
Pentagon officials on Naval Station Everett’s importance to community*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon and Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson will travel to Washington, D.C., this week for a series of meetings updating the state’s Congressional delegation, civilian Pentagon officials and ranking U.S. Navy officers on Naval Station Everett.

“When it comes to Naval Station Everett, the Mayor and I speak with one voice,” said Reardon, who announced the visit during his “State of the County” address to the Snohomish County Council last week.

“This is a true ‘joint mission’,” Stephanson said.

Reardon and Stephanson will have several meetings with top Pentagon officials on Friday. The County Executive and Mayor will meet on Thursday with Washington State’s two senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen and other state Congressional delegation members.

The trip’s purpose is to introduce key Pentagon and Navy officials to Reardon and Stephanson, who were elected in November, 2003. Both the Snohomish County Executive and the Everett Mayor say they will highlight the goodwill that exists locally for Naval Station Everett and its 5,617 service men and women. They will carry with them a short video tape of last May’s “Hero’s Homecoming,” which celebrated the return of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. More than 30,000 people lined Everett’s streets to thank the ship’s crew and their families after the vessel’s record-setting deployment that spanned the Iraq War.

This is the first opportunity for the County Executive and the Mayor to meet with senior Navy leadership and provide an overview of what the community offers the Navy in terms of education, recreation, quality of life and diversity.

Everett and Snohomish County host more than 85 percent of the Navy families assigned to Naval Station Everett and facilities such as the Jim Creek Radio Station.

Reardon and Stephanson will be accompanied to Washington, D.C., by two aides who have extensive backgrounds in Naval Station Everett: Paul Roberts, an Executive Director at Snohomish County, and Pat McClain, the City's Director of Governmental Affairs. Both are involved in a local committee that was organized last year to prepare for the upcoming 2005 round of federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission deliberations.

Roberts, an Everett School Board member, will also represent the Everett School District during the trip.

"The quality of local schools is very important to Navy families," Roberts said. "They know which installations across the country are served by good schools. For them, it is a quality of life issue that influences morale and reenlistment. So we want officials in Washington, D.C., to know that the Everett schools, the City and the County share a joint commitment to Naval Base Everett."

Doug Roulstone, a Vice President of the Everett chapter of the U.S. Navy League and a former captain of the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis, is the fifth member of the delegation.

Visits to Congressional leaders will focus on the community's preparation for BRAC.

"We are prepared for the upcoming round of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission," Reardon said. "Both the City and the County have been working on this issue for the better part of a year, gathering data and information. But the BRAC is not the specific reason for this visit. Both the Pentagon and Navy officials are asking that no lobbying take place on BRAC and we respect that."

Stephanson said, "The City and the County have been preparing for BRAC for some time now. If the Secretary of the Navy or anybody else wants to talk about Naval Station Everett in the context of BRAC, we are ready to do so. The U.S. Navy is Snohomish County's second largest employer, behind only The Boeing Company, and its importance to our communities cannot be overstated."

In a Jan. 23 letter to Peter Potochney, Director of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, Reardon and Stephanson asked that BRAC specifically link morale, retention and recruitment to a community's infrastructure and its quality of life.

Reardon and Stephanson wrote, "We believe that a stable family life in a supportive community positively affects the morale and well being of the military personnel, dependents, and civilian employees of any installation. Good schools; ample recreation and entertainment opportunities; low cost quality housing; safe, secure streets; and an efficient transportation network are just a few aspects of a quality of life.

"Recruitment and retention of military personnel is a significant issue for today's military and is obviously a mission essential factor.

Reardon and Stephanson concluded, "In the final analysis, the issue is not how many bases do we have and how well do they function. Rather, it is how many soldiers and sailors do we have and how well do they function. Local infrastructure and the quality of the surroundings is a major factor in support of our bases and troops."

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