

# MUNINNEWS

October 2010: Volume 100, Issue 4



## MUNICIPAL LEAGUE RATES BALLOT PROPOSALS

### County Tax Proposal Among Six Issues Reviewed

On September 23 the Municipal League of King County released recommendations on six proposals that will appear on the November general election ballot. Notably, the League is not supporting the proposed King County sales tax increase.

For full reports stating pro and con arguments and our rationale, see [www.munileague.org](http://www.munileague.org). In summary, the League made the following recommendations:

- **SUPPORT:** King County Charter Amendment No. 1 to specify the local and regional role of county government,
- **SUPPORT:** King County Charter Amendment No. 2 to change the way political candidates file campaign finance materials,
- **NO POSITION:** King County Charter Amendment No. 3 to grant the Sheriff authority to bargain working conditions,
- **OPPOSE:** King County Proposition 1, which authorizes King County to impose an additional sales tax (two-tenths of one percent) to fund criminal justice services,
- **SUPPORT:** Fairwood Proposition 1 to annex Fairwood to the City of Renton and
- **NO POSITION:** Shoreline Proposition 1, a six-year operations and maintenance levy.

“These were not easy decisions,” said League Co-Chair Kathy Elias. “The sales tax proposal was an especially difficult issue. However, our Committee felt that the County should demonstrate significant progress on the road to reform before asking voters to approve additional taxing authority.”

**If readers have any questions about the recommendations or the process,** please contact the Municipal League directly. The Issues Committee of the Municipal League has worked over the last few months to review six measures on the November ballot. The Board of Directors of the League voted on the six measures on September 20th.

## 2010 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

**King County Charter Amendment No. 1 — Amending the Preamble of the King County Charter to specify the local and regional role of county government and to clarify the purposes of county government. SUPPORT**

The Charter preamble should clearly articulate the County’s responsibilities and priorities, specifically its responsibility to both urban and rural areas and its role as both a regional and local government. This charter amendment is generally consistent with the Charter Review Commission’s recommendations and leaves open the opportunity to create a new executive branch position through either a future charter amendment or an ordinance.

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## HOLD THE DATE: OCT 27

### A Conversation about Government Reform with Rep. Reuven Carlyle

“Our state is home to innovation, creativity, and new approaches in aerospace, software, mobile technology, biotechnology, clean energy, philanthropy, and so much more. As we face the biggest economic transformation in generations, isn’t it time to put government on that list?”

Join us on **Oct. 27, 2010 at noon** for a Brown Bag lunch conversation with an energetic reform-minded legislator who wants to tackle old ways of thinking about public policy and government services.

**Location:** Offices of Perkins Coie, 1201 3rd Avenue, 48th Floor.



*Current and past Municipal League of King County Board Chairs - and hiding in the back (right) is our new Executive Director, Lauri.*

## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Kathy Elias and Gabe Meyer, Co-Chairs



Kathy Elias, left, and Gabe Meyer, right

Voters will see an extraordinarily crowded ballot on November 2nd, with many state, regional and local ballot measures as well as legislative and judicial election choices. This issue of Muni News brings you our selected recommendations on regional and local ballot issues.

For one hundred years the Municipal League has been providing citizens with thorough and non-partisan public information and analysis. The full details of our ballot analysis and candidate background information are available on our website [www.munileague.org](http://www.munileague.org). We hope you find the material useful and informative. If you believe we can do better, please drop us a note on how we can improve.

As Co-Chairs, we recently had the opportunity to sit down with former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton and State Senator Dan McDonald to receive their feedback on how we can do a better job of including Republicans in our candidate rating process. We acknowledge that more of our active volunteers tend to lean Democrat or independent and that we struggle to recruit as diverse a range of representatives as we would like to our CEC committees, our issue studies and even our Board. If you are an R or live in East or South King County, we invite you to call us and get involved with the League.

We continue to actively monitor the work of the Regional Transit Task Force, charged by the County Exec to make policy recommendations on how Metro Transit should address the significant revenue shortfall it faces. So far, we have been impressed with the work of the Task Force. Significant policy development is taking place with the input of a diverse group of thoughtful people. The financial crisis is being used as an opportunity to fix policies that have outlived their usefulness and inefficiencies that need to be swept away. The perspectives of individual interests and communities are being balanced by a sense of common regional needs and benefits. WOW—this sounds like good government in the making!

It's great to feel that we live in a region that tries hard to work together to develop good policy solutions. On the national stage, we read about voter anger, political gridlock and polarization, and loss of faith in our institutions. Here in our region, we believe we can do better.

Warm regards,

Kathy and Gabe

## MEET AARON BROWN

A Fundraiser for the Muni League

He was a Northwest staple for many years before he made it to the "big leagues" and became a network anchor, covering everything from 9/11 to the frontlines. Now he is back to meet you, talk about where he has been and what he has seen, enjoy Western Bridge's gallery, and talk about why the Municipal League of King County deserves your support.

Come and meet Aaron Brown, sample Northwest wines, enjoy appetizers, meet our new Executive Director, and support your Muni League. Tickets based on a suggested donation of \$150 at the door, or you can get your ticket now by calling the League office or visiting our website. They are going fast, so RSVP today!

**Where:**

Western Bridge (at the foot of the West Seattle Bridge in SoDo, south of downtown Seattle)  
3412 4th Avenue South  
Seattle, WA

**When:**

Sunday, October 3, 2010 from 5-8 PM

**RSVP:**

Go to [www.munileague.org](http://www.munileague.org) - follow the links to take you all the way to registration - or call 206.622.8333

**Sponsors:**

***This event is generously brought to you by Alaska Airlines, the Seattle Pan Pacific Hotel, Perkins Coie, and Western Bridge.***

**Our other wonderful sponsors include:**

King County Executive Dow Constantine, Seattle City Councilmember Richard Conlin, Putnam Barber, Deryl Brown-Archie, Kathy Elias, Chris Johnson, Will and Kyleen Niccols, Mike Repass, Gretchen Sorensen, Lucy Steers, Laraine Volkman Edelman, Foster-Pepper, GMMB, PRR, Porter-Novelli, the Seattle Mariners, the Witter Group, Nota Bene Cellars, Januik Winery, Nyhus, Palouse Winery, Red Sky Winery, Tefft Cellars

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**King County Charter Amendment No. 2—Modifying the King County Charter to allow a political candidate to satisfy the requirement that campaign-related finance reports be filed with the county Director of Elections by filing those reports with the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission. SUPPORT**

The Municipal League strongly believes in ensuring transparency when it comes to campaign finance reporting. This amendment is largely administrative in nature and will not adversely affect transparency as reports will be filed through the PDC and will be available to voters through the PDC’s website.

**King County Charter Amendment No. 3—Granting the County Sheriff the authority to bargain working conditions for employees of the Sheriff’s office while reserving to the County Executive the authority to bargain compensation and benefits. NO POSITION**

The Municipal League opposed the creation of a separately elected Sheriff in 1996, the voters disagreed and we now have this position. The question before voters is how to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of this position. We recognize the Sheriff’s need to have authority to control the conditions for which she will be held accountable. However, we are also concerned that bifurcating authority may not be a workable solution.

**King County Proposition 1—Authorizing King County to impose an additional sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent (0.2%) to fund criminal justice services. OPPOSE**

Our opposition to this measure should not be seen as an attack on criminal justice services. We argue that these services are extremely important to citizens of the County and deserve to be adequately funded through means other than an increased sales and use tax.

We agree that times are tough for King County but we are not convinced that King County government has exhausted all other revenue-generating and expense-cutting options and we are disappointed that voters are being asked to approve a sales tax to fund popular and essential public safety services. While this may be a politically expedient way to fill a funding gap, it’s a poor way to govern. Essential services should be protected, not exploited.

The timing of this proposal is also imprudent. The people of King County are facing tumultuous economic times. It is unjust to ask individuals and businesses that are struggling with survival to give even more money to the County through sales taxes. The net effect of this increase is that King County will have the distinction of having the 7th highest sales tax in the country – hardly a calling card to enhance economic competitiveness.

We are sympathetic to the County’s financial predicament. Some difficult cuts have been made and County leadership is taking steps towards reform. However, the results of these reforms have yet to be seen. It is our position that the County should demonstrate significant progress on the road to reform before asking voters to approve additional taxing authority.

**Fairwood Proposition 1—Approving annexation of Fairwood to the City of Renton. SUPPORT**

Significant islands of population remain unincorporated in the urban areas of King County, wedged between growing regional cities. The proposed Fairwood annexation is such an area. It has long been costly and inefficient for King County to continue to serve such areas and residents increasingly expect urban levels of service. In 2006 and 2009, the Municipal League expressed concerns about the financial viability of a proposed new City of Fairwood. In the current recessionary environment of reduced government revenues and sharply lower property values, we are even more strongly convinced that annexation to the much stronger City of Renton is the better option. Annexation to Renton is preferable to incorporation for several reasons: the larger city’s more diversified tax base can accommodate future service and infrastructure expenses more reliably; and residents of Fairwood will receive urban services – public safety, parks, animal control, etc. – directly from the City of Renton without the expense of a new layer of administration and the complexity of contracting.

**Shoreline Proposition 1—Authorizing a six-year maintenance and operation levy to fund basic public safety, parks and recreation, and community services. NO POSITION**

The Municipal League recognizes that local municipalities have real revenue problems resulting from a bad economy, limits in funding mechanisms, and the passage of laws like Washington State Initiative 747 (which the League opposed). Shoreline and other cities project large budget gaps in the coming years and will have to make some very tough decisions if voters chose not to raise their taxes. We commend the City of Shoreline for its transparency, citizen involvement, and willingness to send this levy to the voters. We especially like the way the city has made spending priorities public and communicated the ways in which it has limited spending in the last five years leading up to this levy. We believe it is up to the citizens of Shoreline to decide the types and levels of services they would like to fund though self-imposed property taxes. Shoreline has acted responsibly in giving voters an option, the choice is in the public’s hands.

## Municipal League of King County

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### About the Municipal League

The Municipal League of King County is a nonpartisan volunteer organization that has worked to ensure good government that is open, effective and accountable since 1910.

The Municipal League is dedicated to improving the caliber of public officials and the quality of public decisions.

For more information see [www.munileague.org](http://www.munileague.org). Or contact:  
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