

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF KING COUNTY
SUPPORTS
King County Proposition 1: Veterans and Human Services Levy
August 16, 2011 Primary Election

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

King County voters are being asked to consider renewing the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy. The initial levy was approved by voters in 2005 and expires December 31, 2011. If approved by voters, King County Proposition 1 would continue the existing levy for an additional six years at the current rate of 5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value and would collect approximately \$16 million annually. Half of the funds would continue to be dedicated to veterans and their families and the other half would support general human service programs available to all King County residents. The typical homeowner would pay \$17 per year.

ARGUMENTS FOR PROPOSITION 1:

- Voters should continue investing in our veterans and human services. These funds directly benefit veterans, military personnel and their families, and other individuals and families in need through a variety of housing and supportive services.
- Funds raised through this levy support overall community stability – serving the most in need so that they can be economically and personally successful.
- Economic recovery in King County is slow and many need help. Unemployment remains high, bankruptcies have increased and foreclosures continue. The levy provides funding for key services to support those in need.
- Nearly 50,000 children in King County live at or below the poverty line. The levy provides funding for programming and services for these children.
- Over 95% of the King County veterans receiving Post Traumatic Stress Disorder counseling showed reduced symptoms. Without this levy, the availability of this counseling would be in jeopardy.
- Funding from this levy improves accessibility – helping people access service in satellite locations throughout the county.
- The County has already made significant programmatic cutbacks due to budget challenges. If the measure is not approved, several fundamental programs would be dramatically cut back if not eliminated and many people would lose services.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROPOSITION 1:

- Property taxes are too high and are placing an unnecessary burden on residents during a period of economic uncertainty.
- Voters should have more specific information about how funds will be used. Proponents say that fund allocations will be similar to the existing strategy. The Service Improvement Plan will only be developed if and when the ballot measure is approved.
- The County shouldn't continue to create special silos for funding rather than pay for services through the general fund. This is not the right way to pay for ongoing, essential services.
- The independence of the oversight board is uncertain. Members seem to only represent groups that benefit from the allocation of these funds. A more balanced approach would include "at-large" or more general community members.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

The Municipal League of King County recommends supporting this measure. The renewal of this levy would help sustain essential services to some of our County's most vulnerable populations. We believe \$17 a year is a small price to pay for these critical investments. We recognize that times are tough for King County residents and many are struggling to keep their homes. However, failure to renew this levy may actually make matters worse since it would likely result in the elimination of services to those most in need.