

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF KING COUNTY

SUPPORTS

Charter Amendment No. 1 to amend 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

General Election, November 2, 2010

SUMMARY OF THE MEASURE

This charter amendment modifies language in the King County Charter Preamble and is intended to recognize the county's role as a regional and a local government, emphasize the county's responsibility to urban and rural areas of the county and to make clear that the county's concern extends to the county's economy and environment. This amendment addresses issues raised in numerous public comments to the Charter Review Commission about governance and representation in the unincorporated areas of the county, particularly rural areas.

In 2007-2008 the King County Charter Review Commission proposed placing a charter amendment on the ballot that would amend the Charter Preamble and designate a senior official and an executive office to be focused on the provision of services to unincorporated areas of the county. The charter amendment being presented to voters in November 2010 differs from that proposed by the Charter Review Commission in that it does not include the designation of a senior official in the executive office.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE MEASURE

The following arguments were put forth by the proponents of the measure:

- The amendment makes a powerful and enduring statement to citizens by articulating the county's responsibility to both urban and rural areas and the county's role as a regional and a local government.
- Generally, this amendment is consistent with recommendations of the 2007-2008 Charter Review Commission. The major difference is that it does not create a high-level staff position to represent the interests of unincorporated areas. However, Executive Constantine's appointment of an Unincorporated Areas Relations Manager will go a long way towards fulfilling this vision. Moreover, this charter amendment does not preclude a future charter amendment or ordinance to create such a position.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MEASURE

The following arguments were put forth by the opponents of the measure:

- This charter amendment excludes an important provision included in the Charter Review Commission proposal - designating a cabinet-level position within the Office of the Executive to represent the interests of rural and urban unincorporated area residents.
- The Unincorporated Areas Relations Manager (a position created by Executive Constantine) is not a cabinet-level position (as recommended by the Charter Review Commission). This position also exists at the discretion of the County Executive and could be eliminated.
- There are ways other than a Charter amendment to address this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

The Municipal League of King County recommends supporting the charter amendment to modify the King County Charter preamble. 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.