



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

July 14, 2003

Ordinance 14711

Proposed No. 2003-0270.2

Sponsors Hague, Lambert and Hammond

1 AN ORDINANCE establishing the King County citizens'
2 elections oversight committee.

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4

5 **PREAMBLE:**

6 1. The proper administration of elections is an essential function of county
7 government in Washington state. Public confidence in the prompt and
8 accurate counting of ballots is of the utmost importance to our democratic
9 society. Conducting elections requires numerous other important
10 administrative matters including registering voters, processing filings for
11 candidates and measures, and publishing voters' pamphlets.

12 2. Tens of thousands of absentee ballots were mailed two weeks late for
13 the November 2002 general election. In many cases, the ballots did not
14 arrive in voters mailboxes until the day of the election.

15 3. The metropolitan King County council has provided leadership and
16 strong oversight to restore public confidence in the King County election
17 system.

18 4. The council's committee-of-the-whole received a briefing on December
19 9, 2002, on the operations of the King County elections office in general
20 and the distribution of absentee ballots for the November 2002 general
21 election in particular.

22 5. In February 2003, the Secretary of State's Office released a report
23 reviewing the November 2002 general election in King County. The
24 report found that King County had fallen significantly behind in
25 processing voter registrations. The report also recommended that the
26 county develop or acquire a voter registration system that meets the needs
27 of the county.

28 6. On February 3, 2003, the committee-of-the-whole held a special
29 meeting at the King County mail ballot operations satellite, where
30 absentee ballots are counted. The council toured and inspected the
31 facility.

32 7. On February 14, 2003, the metropolitan King County council adopted
33 Ordinance 14570, which was enacted. The ordinance requires council
34 confirmation of the position of manager of the King County records,
35 elections and licensing services division and the position of superintendent
36 of elections.

37 8. On February 25, 2003, the council's labor, operations and technology
38 committee received a briefing on the review of King County election
39 process by the Office of the Secretary of State, and the King County
40 records, elections and licensing services division.

41 9. In March 2003, the metropolitan King County council hired an
42 elections consultant, a former county elections manager, to conduct an
43 independent review of county elections.

44 10. On April 22, 2003, the labor, operations and technology committee
45 received a briefing on the elections consultant's review of the county
46 election process.

47 11. Several polling places ran out of ballots during the April 22, 2003
48 special election for the Highline School District.

49 12. On April 22, 2003, the council's elections consultant produced "The
50 Final Report to the County Council on Reviewing the Election Process in
51 King County". The report makes short- and long-term recommendations
52 for improving the election process in King County.

53 13. More than one thousand five hundred absentee ballots for vote-by-
54 mail precincts in unincorporated King County were not mailed until four
55 days before the May 20, 2003 election.

56 14. On May 20, 2003, the metropolitan King County council sent King
57 County executive Ron Sims a letter signed by all councilmembers
58 confirming an agreement between the council and executive to use the
59 council's elections consultant to closely monitor the elections process from
60 within the elections section. The letter also recommended increased
61 consultation and assistance from the Washington Secretary of State for the
62 fall 2003 elections and encouraged appointment of a citizen panel to
63 monitor the fall elections and restore voter confidence.

64 15. The council now desires to establish such a panel in the form of a
65 citizen's oversight committee with the ultimate goal of restoring public
66 confidence in King County elections.

67 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

68 SECTION 1. Establishment – definition. The King County citizens' elections
69 oversight committee is hereby established. For the purposes of this ordinance, "the
70 committee" means the King County elections citizen oversight committee.

71 SECTION 2. Membership – appointment process, requirements and
72 restrictions.

73 A. The committee shall consist of nine voting members. The members shall be
74 appointed by the executive from nominations submitted by the chair of the council. The
75 appointments shall be subject to confirmation by the council.

76 B. Membership shall include one representative from the Municipal League,
77 League of Women Voters, the King County Democratic Party, the King County
78 Republican Party, the Office of the Secretary of State and a King County school district
79 and three King County registered voters.

80 C. All nominees should have:

81 1. Substantial working knowledge of local or state government elections
82 operations and management;

83 2. A strong commitment to an accountable, transparent, well-managed and
84 efficient elections operation in King County; and

85 3. A willingness to commit the time necessary to attend committee meetings and
86 activities.

87 D. A nominee or appointee shall not hold or be a candidate for elected office.

88 E. The chair of the council shall submit nominations to the executive. The
89 executive shall transmit to the council nine appointments to the committee by July 31,
90 2003. The transmittal shall be accompanied by appropriate contact information for the
91 appointees.

92 F. Terms of committee membership shall be eight months and shall not be for
93 staggered terms.

94 **SECTION 3. Mission and goals.** The mission of the committee is to provide
95 citizen oversight of the operation and management of the elections section of the King
96 County records, elections and licensing services division. The goal of the committee
97 shall be to make recommendations to:

98 A. Improve performance of the King County elections section;

99 B. Improve accountability of the King County elections section; and

100 C. Ensure that accountability and performance of the elections section is
101 provided in an open, transparent manner that is meaningful to the citizens of King
102 County.

103 **SECTION 4. Responsibilities.**

104 A. Before undertaking its other responsibilities identified in this ordinance, the
105 committee shall elect officers and adopt administrative procedures.

106 B. To accomplish its missions and goal, the committee shall complete the
107 following tasks:

108 1. Reviewing "The Final Report to the County Council on Reviewing the
109 Election Process in King County" and the Office of the Secretary of State's report, which
110 reviewed the November 2002 general election in King County;

111 2. Reviewing current King County elections operations and management,
112 policies and procedures, business processes and business practices; and

113 3. Monitoring the fall 2003 primary and general elections in King County to
114 determine if improvements should be made to ensure the successful operation and
115 management of elections in King County and to ensure that problem areas are discussed
116 in an open and public manner.

117 C. The committee shall also develop the following reports:

118 1. A report on improving the King County elections section's mission statement,
119 goals and objectives, performance measures and benchmarks; and

120 2. A report on the fall 2003 primary and general elections in King County,
121 including recommendations to improve and make available to citizens elections that will
122 occur in King County in 2004. This report should also determine if the recommendations
123 made by the Office of the Secretary of State and the council's elections consultant were
124 implemented for the fall 2003 elections.

125 **SECTION 5. Staffing and operations.**

126 A. The lead analyst for the King County labor, operations and technology
127 committee, or its successor, or another staff person designated by the chair of the council,
128 shall assist with coordinating the initial staffing and operation of the committee.

129 B. The committee shall identify an independent contractor to support the
130 committee, and shall request that the chair of the council hire those persons or contractor

131 as provided in the council's organizational motion. The person, persons or contractor
132 shall assist and facilitate the committee, conduct independent research and analysis,
133 review best practices for operations and management of elections, review current and
134 proposed information systems for elections, and prepare final reports of the committee's
135 findings and recommendations, as required herein.

136 C. County staff in the department of executive services shall be available to
137 answer questions and provide information to the committee.

138 **SECTION 6. Compensation and reimbursement.** The county shall reimburse
139 committee members for mileage at the standard county reimbursement rate for travel
140 within the county and to and from scheduled committee meetings. The county shall
141 provide parking space free of charge in the county garage to committee members while
142 attending meetings where committee business is conducted.

143 **SECTION 7. Expiration.** The committee expires on March 31, 2004. It is the

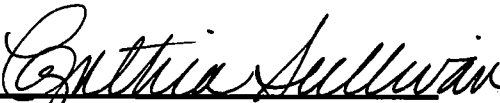
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144 intent of the council to evaluate the continued need of the committee before the
145 committee sunsets and to consider whether to repeal or continue the committee.
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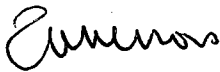
Ordinance 14711 was introduced on 6/9/2003 and passed by the Metropolitan King
County Council on 7/14/2003, by the following vote:

Yes: 13 - Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Edmonds, Mr. von Reichbauer, Ms. Lambert, Mr.
Phillips, Mr. Pelz, Mr. McKenna, Mr. Constantine, Mr. Hammond, Mr.
Gossett, Ms. Hague, Mr. Irons and Ms. Patterson
No: 0
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Cynthia Sullivan, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 25th day of July, 2003.


Ron Sims, County Executive

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KING COUNTY COUNCIL

Attachments None