



Washington
Secretary of State
SAM REED

ELECTIONS DIVISION
520 Union Avenue SE - PO Box 40229
Olympia, WA 98504-0229
Tel: 360.902.4180
Fax: 360.664.4619
www.secstate.wa.gov/elections

July 10, 2007

Dick Muri
Pierce County Council
930 Tacoma Ave S, Rm 1046
Tacoma, WA 98402-2176

Dear Councilmember Muri,

I write to urge your support for Pierce County to move to all-mail elections.

I write this letter from the perspective of having supported for the last 24 years providing voters with the option of voting at a neighborhood poll site or by mail.

County Auditor Pat McCarthy has also been one of the champions of poll sites in Washington State. I see that she is now making a recommendation, with great reluctance, to move to vote by mail in Pierce County.

The fact is that we are in a time of great change in elections. The 2000 Presidential election in Florida, the Supreme Court's decision in Bush v. Gore, the passage by Congress of the Help America Vote Act, the 2004 Governor's race in Washington, and recent state election reform measures have quite simply changed the landscape for elections in this state.

One important theme consistent to all these reforms is the value of making the voting experience as uniform as possible for voters statewide.

With King County going Vote by Mail in 2008, Washington will have 37 vote-by-mail counties, and only two counties with poll sites. Kittitas County is mostly vote-by-mail but has retained two poll sites. Pierce County will be the only county in Washington maintaining county-wide poll sites.

Most counties have moved to vote-by-mail to improve accuracy and accountability in elections. Quite simply, managing one election reduces the opportunity for error compared with managing two elections.

Pierce County is now faced with the prospect of actually managing three elections in one. That is, administering vote by mail, poll sites, and ranked-choice voting presents an overwhelming challenge for election administration, and one that invites an unacceptable level of error in a climate where making mistakes in elections is no longer an option.

In an election with so much complexity and high public expectations, it is simply unfair to ask poll workers to manage multiple ballot styles, multiple precincts, provisional ballots, disability access units, and ranked choice voting, and expect error free results.

Having served as the Thurston County Auditor for twenty years, I understand well the concerns being expressed by Auditor McCarthy in this challenging situation. I fully support her recommendation to move to vote-by-mail.

Of course, 90% of the ballots cast in the 2006 Primary in Pierce County were Vote by Mail ballots. That is, Pierce County voters themselves have already overwhelmingly made the choice to move to vote-by-mail.

I urge the Pierce County Council to make the final step and make Pierce County's election program consistent with the rest of the state.

Sincerely,

SAM REED
Secretary of State