

PROPOSED ORDINANCE 2005-0324

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2005 STAFF REPORT
ATTACHMENT 2 & 3**



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lisa Grove and Ben Patinkin

RE: A Recent Poll Shows That King County Voters Are Unwilling to Raise Taxes for Veterans and Human Services

DATE: June 6, 2005

Grove Insight conducted a telephone survey of 400 registered voters in King County, Washington using a voter file sample. Professional Interviewers conducted the survey, which was in the field from May 21st to 24th, 2005. The margin of error for the sample size as a whole is plus or minus 4.9 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

The Veterans and Human Services Proposal Will Be Very Difficult to Pass

King County voters are not enthusiastic about raising taxes to fund veterans or human services right now. Area voters cannot even muster a majority of support for the proposal that funds veteran services, programs for the elderly, juvenile justice, violence shelters, childcare assistance and community health clinics with a 14 cents per \$1,000 assessed value property tax increase.¹

The Veterans and Human Services Proposal		
Approve, strongly	26%	50%
Approve, not strongly	14%	
Undecided, lean approve	10%	
Undecided	15%	
Undecided, lean reject	4%	
Reject, not strongly	10%	
Reject, strongly	21%	35%

Only half say they would support an increase in their property taxes to fund this package.

¹ Language used for levy proposal: "The King County Council ordinance concerns funding for veterans and families in King County. This proposition would fund veteran services – including supportive housing and counseling, childcare for working families, juvenile justice programs, drug and alcohol treatment, job training, elder care, prescription drug relief, community healthcare clinics and shelters for abuse victims. The funds would be separate from the King County general fund and subject to an independent review for accountability. This proposition would authorize King County to levy an additional regular property tax of 14 cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2006."

Regrettably, this is our strongest package, meaning that nothing we tested will pass this November.

Successful levies start at least 10 percentage points higher than this one does because it is extremely difficult to increase support – or even hold on to current levels – over the course of a campaign. Simply put, this proposed levy is not viable right now. We are also troubled by the fact that only one-quarter of the electorate offer “strong” support for the measure.

Making matters worse, there are a number of worrisome cleavages within the electorate. While there is a substantial gender gap, women are not where they need to be in order to assure a win. Meanwhile, men are very divided over the levy. Older voters and homeowners also post support that is well below the majority mark as does every geographic portion of King County except the city of Seattle. Most worrisome of all, only low propensity voters provide a measurable amount of support for the Veterans and Human Services proposal – a poor development in an off-year election.

The 14 Cents per \$1,000 Levy Is the Best Bet			
	14 Cents	12 Cents	8 Cents
Approve	50%	28%	27%
Reject	35%	58%	59%
Undecided	15%	13%	14%

Lowering the amount of the proposed levy does not help. Indeed, support for the combined Veterans and Human Services levy drops precipitously when the price and number of covered

programs is reduced. Many of the subgroups most likely to defect in this case make up some of the proposed levy’s core support that it will need to rely on in order to succeed.

The Veterans Services Proposal Is Less Popular than a More Comprehensive Human Services Package

While the more comprehensive proposal garners approval from half the electorate, the levy which focuses on veterans benefits can muster only a very slim plurality of King County voters. With a five-point margin of support and less than a majority in favor of this package, this particular levy is doomed to failure. As with the other package, strong support is anemic and undecideds appear likely to break in the wrong direction.

The Combined Proposal Is More Viable		
	Combined	Veterans only
Approve	50%	43%
Reject	35%	38%
Undecided	15%	18%

The traditional electoral divides that we see on funding measures such as this do not work to our advantage. While women are more likely to support the proposal than men, their support falls below the majority mark. Furthermore, nearly half of male voters reject the veterans proposal. As with the combined proposal, support for the veterans-only version lags among voters over 50, college-educated voters, home-owners and most geographic portions of the county. However, in this case, Democrats and Seattle residents also fail to provide a majority who approve the proposal. Simply put, this proposal has no demographic base of support while the more comprehensive package does.

As with the combined proposal, support for the Veterans proposal drops significantly when the levy price and coverage is lowered. Original supporters of the Veterans Services proposal who defect include renters, younger voters, parents, medium propensity voters, poll voters and Independent women.

Any Future Property Tax Proposal for Veterans and Human Services Needs to Include Services for the Entire Community, Not Just Veterans

The Veterans Services proposal lags behind the combined services proposal among every major subgroup. While every demographic group except Republicans provides at least a plurality of support for the Veterans and Human Services proposal, the same cannot be said of the Veterans Services only proposal. Obviously, any future levy proposal must include Human Services programs as part of the package.

A future levy proposal should include programs that help low-income seniors and the frail elderly. More than one-third of voters declare that this is "one of the most important" priorities for more funding, making it their highest concern. Furthermore, child-care assistance, community health care clinics and food and shelter for the homeless should also be considered as necessary items in a future services package.

It should be noted that veterans services are viewed as a low tier item by voters for future funding. In two separate questions programs for veterans fall much lower than care for other vulnerable populations in King County. In fact, when veterans services are added to the mix of programs included in a "new revenue source" these programs provide little, if any, upward momentum for a property tax proposal in the minds of voters. This should be taken into consideration when considering the make-up of any revenue raising proposal for county services.

A Public Education Campaign Is Needed to Increase Support for a Future Levy

Proponents of the levy package need to embark upon a public education campaign in order to build support for a future proposal. Persuadable subgroups in the electorate where support needs to be built-up include Seattle residents, residents of cities in the northern and eastern portions of the county, Independents, medium propensity voters, those with a high school education or less, women and Democrats. Additionally, proponents need to increase support among certain more hostile groups including older voters and men.

Hello. My name is _____. I'm calling from _____. We are conducting a public opinion survey and I would like to ask you some questions. We are not selling anything, and I will not ask you for a contribution or donation.

May I please speak with _____? **[READ NAME FROM LIST. IF PERSON IS NOT THERE, ASK FOR ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER. THE OTHER PERSON'S NAME MUST ALSO BE ON THE LIST.]**

1. How likely would you say you are to vote in the November 8th, 2005 election for city and county races – are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances about 50-50, are you probably not going to vote, or are you definitely not going to vote?

Almost certain	87
Probably will vote	13
50-50.....	TERMINATE
Probably not.....	TERMINATE
Definitely not.....	TERMINATE
dk.....	TERMINATE

[ROTATE QUESTION BLOCKS I. AND II.]

___[QUESTION BLOCK I. Q.2-Q.4]

2. I'm going to read you language for a possible proposal that may be on the ballot in November. The King County Council ordinance concerns funding for veterans and families in King County. This proposition would fund veteran services – including supportive housing and counseling, childcare for working families, juvenile justice programs, drug and alcohol treatment, job training, elder care, prescription drug relief, community healthcare clinics and shelters for abuse victims. The funds would be separate from the King County general fund and subject to an independent review for accountability. This proposition would authorize King County to levy an additional regular property tax of 14 cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2006. If the election were held today, would you vote to approve or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? **[IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:]** Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? **[IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:]** If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	26	50
Approve, not strongly.....	14	
Undecided, lean approve.....	10	
Undecided.....	15	
Undecided, lean reject.....	4	
Reject, not strongly	10	
Reject, strongly.....	21	35

3. Another possible proposal would be similar to the one I just read and would fund veteran services, including supportive housing, counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, childcare and shelter for abuse victims. However, it would significantly reduce or eliminate juvenile justice programs, job training, community healthcare clinics, prescription drug relief and elder care. The proposal would be funded by a property tax levy of 12 cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2006. If the election were held today, would you vote to approve or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? **[IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:]** Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? **[IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:]** If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	12	28
Approve, not strongly.....	10	
Undecided, lean approve.....	6	
Undecided.....	13	
Undecided, lean reject.....	8	
Reject, not strongly	14	
Reject, strongly.....	36	58

4. Another possible, smaller proposal would be similar to the one I just read and would fund veteran services, including supportive housing and counseling, and shelters for abuse victims. However, it would significantly reduce or eliminate childcare, juvenile justice programs, drug and alcohol treatment, job training, community health care clinics, prescription drug relief and elder care. The proposal would be funded by a property tax levy of eight cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2006. If the election were held today, would you vote to approve or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? [IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:] Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? [IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:] If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	12	27
Approve, not strongly.....	10	
Undecided, lean approve.....	5	
Undecided.....	14	
Undecided, lean reject.....	7	
Reject, not strongly	14	
Reject, strongly.....	38	57

QUESTION BLOCK II. [Q.5-7]

5. I'm going to read you language for a possible proposal that may be on the ballot in November. The proposed King County Council ordinance concerns funding to assist veterans, active duty reservists and families. This proposition includes funding for supportive housing and homelessness prevention as part of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, employment assistance, counseling and other health and human services programs. A citizen oversight board would review and report on expenditure of levy proceeds. This proposition would authorize King County to levy an additional regular property tax of eight cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed valuation with collection beginning in 2006. If the election were held today, would you vote to approve or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? [IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:] Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? [IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:] If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	22	43
Approve, not strongly.....	13	
Undecided, lean approve.....	8	
Undecided.....	18	
Undecided, lean reject.....	4	
Reject, not strongly	10	
Reject, strongly.....	24	38

6. Another possible, smaller veterans-focused proposal would be similar to the previous proposal but would significantly reduce access to health and human services programs, such as childcare, programs for at-risk youth and community healthcare clinics. This proposal would be funded by a property tax levy of four-point-one cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed value. If the election were held today, would you vote to approve or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? [IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:] Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? [IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:] If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	13	32
Approve, not strongly.....	11	
Undecided, lean approve.....	8	
Undecided.....	15	
Undecided, lean reject.....	5	
Reject, not strongly	15	
Reject, strongly.....	34	54

7. [ROTATE PARAGRAPHS BELOW.]

___ **SOME PEOPLE/OTHER PEOPLE** say that the proposal to create a property tax levy that focuses so much on veterans services is the wrong approach. They say that the federal government spends billions of dollars to help our military veterans and that at a time when the county cannot even afford to maintain basic programs for children and elderly, it should not be spending additional millions on military veterans alone.

___ **SOME PEOPLE/OTHER PEOPLE** say that post-traumatic stress is very high for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and that veterans in general are more at risk for homelessness and other social problems. These people say that after the sacrifices these men and women made for our country, it is not too much to ask that we increase county funding for those veterans who need them most. If the election were held today would you vote to approve or reject this veterans-focused property tax levy proposition of four-point-one cents per \$1,000 dollars of assessed value, or reject the proposition, or are you undecided? **[IF "APPROVE" OR "REJECT," ASK:]** Is that _____ (approve/reject) strongly or not so strongly? **[IF "UNDECIDED," ASK:]** If the election were held today and you had to decide, in which direction do you lean?

Approve, strongly	27	49
Approve, not strongly.....	12	
Undecided, lean approve.....	10	
Undecided.....	12	
Undecided, lean reject.....	4	
Reject, not strongly.....	9	
Reject, strongly.....	25	38

END QUESTION BLOCKS

SPLIT SAMPLE A

8. The King County Council has reduced health and human services funding for the last five years and will continue to do so as a result of unfunded mandates and other pressures on its general fund. Do you favor or oppose a new revenue source like a property tax levy to maintain the most important services to children, families and the elderly, or aren't you sure? **[IF "FAVOR" OR "OPPOSE," ASK:]** Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, strongly	32	51
Favor, not strongly.....	19	
Oppose, not strongly.....	7	
Oppose, strongly.....	22	29
Not sure.....	20	

SPLIT SAMPLE B

9. The King County Council has reduced health and human services funding for the last five years and will continue to do so as a result of unfunded mandates and other pressures on its general fund. Do you favor or oppose a new revenue source like a property tax levy to maintain the most important services to children, families, the elderly and veterans, or aren't you sure? **[IF "FAVOR" OR "OPPOSE," ASK:]** Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, strongly	34	54
Favor, not strongly.....	20	
Oppose, not strongly.....	7	
Oppose, strongly.....	23	30
Not sure.....	15	

10. The King County Council will be asking voters to pay for a proposed property tax levy to create a dedicated fund that will support the county's community health, human services and veterans programs. One option for this proposal is to raise more money than the county currently is providing its community health and human services programs in order to ensure that the most important services receive funding. It would cost about \$37 dollars per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars.

Another option is to raise \$30 million dollars to fund the significant unmet need in King County. This would cost \$32 dollars per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars.

Another option is to raise \$20 million dollars, a slight increase over what the county now spends. This would cost about \$21 dollars per year.

Finally, the last option open to the King County Council is to continue to reduce its community health and human services programs and raise a property tax only for veterans services. This would cost about \$11 for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars. Which of the following proposals do you prefer most? Let me read them again quickly. **[READ, ROTATE]**

- Raise money to ensure that the most important services receive funding which would cost \$37 dollars per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars.....27
- Raise the same amount of money that the county is currently providing for community health and human services programs which would cost \$32 dollars per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars..... 12
- Raise the bare minimum that the county would need to fund only a few community health and human services programs which would cost \$21 dollars per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars..... 11
- Fund only county veterans programs which would cost \$11 per year for a house assessed at \$264,000 dollars 11
- or
- Aren't you sure?..... 16
- DON'T WANT TO RAISE ANY TAXES [VOLUNTEERED].....22**

Knowing that King County has many different community health and human services programs that need revenue but also realizing that you may have personal financial pressures right now, please tell me how you would vote on the following possible proposals. After I read each one, please tell me whether you would vote yes or no. If you are not sure, you can tell me that, too. **[IF "YES" OR "NO," ASK:]** Is that **[YES/NO]** strongly or not so strongly?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: DO NOT ROTATE

	Strong Yes	Not strg Yes	Not strong No	Strong No	Not sure
11. A \$30 million levy which amounts to approximately 12 cents per \$1,000 dollars assessed value. This would mean that the county could cover most of the immediate community health, human services and veterans needs it is confronted with, but would not be able to fund after school programs for teens and care services for low income seniors.....	16	20	14	32	18
12. A \$20 million dollar levy which amounts to approximately eight cents per \$1,000 dollars assessed value. This would mean that the county could cover most of the immediate veterans needs and some community health and human services programs, but would not be able to fund after school programs for teens, care services for low income seniors and drug treatment programs for meth addicts and other juvenile justice programs.....	12	19	20	34	15

	Strong Yes	Not strg Yes	Not strong No	Strong No	Not sure
13. A \$10 million dollar levy which amounts to approximately four-point-one cents per \$1,000 dollars assessed value. This would mean that the county could only cover veterans services programs. It would not be able to fund any community health and human services programs for county residents who are not military veterans.....	11	16	19	40	14

14. I'm going to read you a list of eight community health and human services program areas. If property taxes were raised in King County, which of the of the following eight program areas do you think is the most important priority to receive more funding? If you are not sure, or do not think taxes should be raised under any circumstance, please say so and we will move on. If you would like me to read this list again, just say so. **[READ LIST AND ROTATE.]**

15. And what would be your second choice?

	First	Second
___ Suicide prevention for teens.....	6	6
___ Child-care assistance for those moving from public assistance to full-time employment.....	16	15
___ Programs for low-income senior citizens and the frail elderly.....	19	16
___ Domestic violence and sexual assault services and shelters.....	7	11
___ Community health care clinics for those who have no place else to go.....	14	11
___ Job training programs for highschool dropouts.....	6	7
___ Health care and other services for military veterans.....	8	9
___ Providing food and shelter to the homeless.....	8	15
DON'T WANT TAXES RAISED.....	7	5
WANT MONEY SPENT ELSEWHERE (VOL.).....	2	1
DK/NA.....	7	4

I'm going to read you some programs that the King County Council will cut by 2007. After each, please tell me how important each program is to you personally. Is it one of the most important community health and human services programs that King County can fund, is it very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all? If you are not sure, you can tell me that, too. **[ROTATE]**

	One of most	Very Imptnt	S.what Imptnt	Not too	Not at all	Not sure
___ 16. Local food banks for those in need.....	16	45	25	6	7	1
___ 17. Childcare assistance for those who can't afford to pay for day care and other early childhood needs.....	15	34	30	10	8	2
___ 18. Programs that help people addicted to meth kick the habit and become a productive member of the community.....	7	24	34	20	13	2
___ 19. Youth recreation programs and after school activities that keep kids off the streets.....	13	37	30	11	7	1
___ 20. Services to deal with post-traumatic stress syndrome and job placement programs that help military veterans.....	13	31	34	11	10	2

[ROTATE ONTO NEXT PAGE]

31. What was the last level of schooling you completed?

High school graduate, or less	17
Some college.....	25
College graduate.....	36
Post-graduate.....	20
NA	2

32. In which of the following ranges does your family income fall?

below \$20 thousand	5
20 but less than 30 thousand.....	8
30 but less than 40 thousand.....	10
40 but less than 50 thousand.....	8
50 but less than 75 thousand.....	13
75 but less than 100 thousand.....	10
100 thousand and over	16
n/a	31

33. Do you have any children under the age of 18 living in your household?

Yes	23
No.....	74
DK.....	3

34. What is your ZIP Code, please? _____

That completes our public opinion survey. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation, and have a pleasant (day/evening).