

..Drafter

Clerk 06/20/2006

..Title

AN ORDINANCE authorizing the conduct of vote-by-mail elections and directing the director of the records, elections and licensing services division to conduct all primary, special and general elections in King County entirely by mail ballot beginning on a date in 2007 or in 2008 to be determined by the director only after certain conditions are met.

..Body

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Findings:

A. The number of King County voters who vote by absentee ballot currently fluctuates between approximately seventy and eighty percent in any given election.

B. In the 2005 primary, 81.73 percent of the ballots cast in King County were cast by mail.

C. Nearly sixty percent of all registered voters in King County are currently registered to automatically vote by absentee ballot.

D. The current dual system of conducting elections by mail and polls in King County requires five hundred twenty-eight polling locations and close to four thousand

poll workers for a countywide election, plus a full scale mail ballot processing operation and facility.

E. In 2005, the Washington state Legislature amended Title 29A RCW to allow counties the option of conducting all elections by mail.

F. As of April 2006, thirty-four of the thirty-nine counties in Washington state have adopted legislation to authorize all mail voting.

G. Conducting all elections in King County by mail will allow the county to focus resources and systems to gain efficiencies and increase security by limiting dependency on human interaction and ballot handling.

SECTION 2. The director of the records, elections and licensing services division is directed to conduct all King County elections entirely by mail ballot in accordance with state law beginning on a date in 2007 or in 2008 determined by the director only after the following conditions have been met:

A. A new director of records, elections and licensing services and a superintendent of elections have been appointed by the executive and confirmed by the council;

B. The director and elections section staff have completed the cultural change and management training recommended by the citizens' election oversight committee and the independent task force on elections; and

C. The executive has transmitted and the council has approved by motion a plan with cost estimates for regional voting centers and ballot drop boxes. The plan shall be filed in the form of an original and ten copies with the clerk of the council, who will

retain the original and will forward copies to each councilmember and to the lead staff of the committee-of-the-whole.

SECTION 3. There shall be an electronic tracking system established for tracking ballots so that voters can, through use of the Internet, follow the movement of their ballots as they move from King County to the voter and back to King County for counting and crediting the voter for voting.

SECTION 4. Prior to implementation of vote-by-mail elections, the executive shall transmit to the council a report that identifies the estimated capital and operating cost of regional voting centers and drop boxes, including staffing costs for temporary workers and sheriff deputies that may be needed at regional voting centers and in the transport of ballots, a map identifying the location of regional voting centers and drop boxes and security measures that will be put in place for regional voting centers and drop boxes. Implementation of vote-by-mail shall not occur until the council has approved the report by motion. The report shall be filed in the form of an original and ten copies with

the clerk of the council, who will retain the original and will forward copies to each councilmember and to the lead staff of the committee-of-the-whole.