



vote!

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Upthegrove:

Our democracy is predicated on the belief that everyone's voice matters and that we should all have an opportunity to weigh-in on decisions about our community. That truth holds regardless of our race, income, background, gender, age, or the language we speak at home. One of our most important mandates at King County Elections is to ensure that everyone has access to the ballot, and essential to that effort is providing translated election materials.

Last year I transmitted to the King County Council the 2022 Elections Language Access Report. In putting together that report, which is required every five years under KCC 2.16.136, my team worked extensively with partners across county government as well as providers, leaders, and advocates in the community. Based on both data and feedback from community, I recommended adding two new languages, Somali and Russian. Taking those recommendations to heart, the King County Council saw fit to approve funding for those languages in the 2023-2024 biennial budget and my team has been busily preparing to launch service this year in advance of the Primary Election.

With the enclosed legislation, I'm asking the Council to protect that access. Codifying the provision of ballots – and all election materials – in Somali and Russian, just like the Council did for Korean and Spanish back in 2015, ensures that those communities will continue to have meaningful access to democracy, no matter which elected officials are in office. I very much hope you will support this legislation and please don't hesitate to let me know if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Julie Wise
Elections Director

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers
ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
Dow Constantine, King County Executive, Executive Office