



## Legislation Text

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A MOTION relating to climate change funding, requesting that the executive assess funding options to address the climate crisis in consultation with a work group of interested parties, and transmit a report, a proposed motion, and, if recommended, a proposed ordinance.

WHEREAS, human activities have caused current levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases to exceed any level measured for at least the past 800,000 years and have already caused global warming of more than one degree Celsius over pre-industrial levels, and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Legislature's findings associated with RCW 70A.45.020 state that climate change is an existential threat to the livelihoods, health, and well-being of all residents of the state, and that Washington is experiencing a climate emergency in the form of increasingly devastating wildfires, flooding, drought, rising temperatures and sea levels, lack of snowpack, and increases in ocean acidification caused in part by climate change, and

WHEREAS, Washington's built environment, which includes buildings, transportation infrastructure, water, wastewater, and energy systems, will face increasing climate-related hazards due to rising seas, more intense heavy rains, river floods, increasing temperatures, and more frequent wildfires, and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Legislature's findings associated with RCW 70A.45.020 state that the state, including its counties, cities, and residents, must engage in activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on fossil fuels, and indicates that the effort to restore a safe and stable climate will require mobilization across all levels of government, and that the longer the state delays in taking definitive action to reduce emissions, the greater the threat posed by climate change to current and future generations, and

the more costly it will be to protect and maintain communities against the impacts of climate change, and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Legislature's findings in RCW 70A.65.005 state that actions to increase the resilience of Washington communities, natural resource lands, and ecosystems can prevent and reduce impacts to communities and the environment and improve their ability to recover, and

WHEREAS, King County has demonstrated leadership among local governments nationwide through its focus on climate change, in 2012 adopting its first Strategic Climate Action Plan ("SCAP") and becoming one of the first local jurisdictions in the nation to comprehensively plan to address the threats of climate change, and

WHEREAS, the 2020 SCAP identifies the primary sources of greenhouse gases in King County as fossil fuels used for transportation and energy used to heat, cool, and power the region's homes and buildings, and

WHEREAS, the 2020 SCAP emphasizes investments in preserving open space and forest lands not just as a means of increasing carbon sequestration by protecting trees and vegetation, but also as a means of protecting vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change, as open space lands can help to mitigate urban heat island effect and other negative health impacts resulting from climate change, and

WHEREAS, the 2020 SCAP states "Frontline Communities are those that will be disproportionately impacted by climate change; these are the populations that face historic[al] and current inequities, often experience the earliest and most acute impacts of climate change, and have limited resources and/or capacity to adapt," and King County recognizes that that those communities are particularly vulnerable to excessive heat, poor air quality, and flooding episodes, all associated with a changing climate, and

WHEREAS, King County must act to accomplish a systematic response to climate change and its impacts by taking steps both to limit and sequester the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change and to prepare for, mitigate, adapt to, and respond to climate change impacts, and

WHEREAS, RCW 84.55.050 established a process by which counties can increase regular property

taxes in excess of one percent per year through a vote of the people, known as a levy lid lift, and this mechanism would provide funding critical to the county's systematic response to climate change and its impacts;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A.1. The executive is requested to assess funding options, which together or individually, would secure one billion dollars over a six- or nine-year period for the purpose of addressing the climate crisis through the reduction, prevention, and sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions and the preparation for, mitigation of, adaptation to, and response to the impacts of climate change. The options should include, but not be limited to, a property tax levy proposal with collections beginning in 2025, revenues relating to solid waste disposal and wastewater treatment, and any other potential revenue sources. The executive should consult with a work group of interested parties as identified in section A.3. of this motion.

2. The proposal should give full consideration to, and center, concerns of equity and social justice generally, and environmental justice specifically, including the disproportionate impacts that climate change can have on frontline communities and other vulnerable populations. The proposal should also seek a balance between long-range greenhouse gas reduction goals and pressing equity needs.

3.a. The executive should form a work group of interested parties for the purpose of developing the proposal. The proposal development process should be community driven, embody the principles of delegated power and community ownership, and align with the Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities framework of the 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan.

b. The work group should include, but not be limited to, representatives of:

- (1) the climate equity community task force;
- (2) organizations concerned with topics such as climate change, low-emission or no-emission transportation alternatives, energy conservation, environmental protection, and equity and social justice; and
- (3) frontline communities and other groups directly impacted by climate change.

4. The proposal should take the form of a written report and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. a summary of the development proposal process;

b. if a property tax levy is recommended, recommendations for provisions to be included in a proposed levy ordinance, including:

(1) an initial levy rate, time period for the levy lid lift, and limit factor to be used, along with estimated annual proceeds from each year of levy collections, using the most recent data from the office of economic and financial analysis;

(2) a recommendation for the categories of expenditures to be funded with levy proceeds, including, at a minimum, the following:

(a) projects or programs to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector;

(b) projects or programs to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions resulting from energy consumption in structures;

(c) the purchase or acquisition of open space land identified through the land conservation initiative that will sequester greenhouse gases or mitigate urban heat island effect or other climate impacts; and

(d) projects or programs to prepare for, mitigate, adapt to, or respond to the impacts of climate change, including, but not limited to, extreme weather events and wildfire smoke;

(3) a proposed percentage allocation of levy funding among the expenditure categories; and

(4) any other recommendations of the executive and work group to be included in the proposed levy ordinance;

c. an assessment of potential revenues relating to solid waste disposal and wastewater treatment, and any other potential revenue sources for the purpose of addressing the climate crisis through the reduction, prevention, and sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions and the preparation for, mitigation of, adaptation to,

and response to the impacts of climate change; and

d. a preliminary implementation plan, including, but not limited to:

(1) recommended subcategories of expenditures, such as grant programs and specific projects or bodies of work;

(2) a proposal for overall administrative responsibility and management of expenditures and functions relating to the levy proceeds and other funding sources; and

(3) proposed provisions for annual reporting to the council regarding accomplishments, challenges, total expenditures, allocation of expenditures, and metrics regarding greenhouse gas emissions reduced or prevented, greenhouse gases sequestered, and impacts addressed.

B. No later than April 30, 2024, the executive should electronically file the following with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for budget and fiscal management committee or its successor:

1. The proposal report, as set forth in section A.4. of this motion;

2. A proposed motion acknowledging receipt of a proposal report; and

3. If recommended by the proposal report, a proposed ordinance providing for the submission to the qualified electors of King County at the general election to be held in King County on November 5, 2024, of a proposition authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, for the purpose of addressing the climate crisis through the reduction, prevention, and sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions and the preparation for, mitigation of, adaptation to, and response to the impacts of climate change, that is consistent with the recommendations of the proposal report.