



Legislation Text

File #: 2007-0453, **Version:** 2

Clerk 09/24/2007

A MOTION to establish a gang suppression unit within the King County sheriff's office for purposes of reducing gang-related crime and ensuring community safety.

WHEREAS, under the state Constitution, state law and county ordinance, the King County sheriff's office is responsible for certain mandated regional and local law enforcement services. Foremost among these responsibilities is that the sheriff's office is the first response "police department" for all of King County's unincorporated areas and for twelve cities through contracts. As a consequence, the sheriff provides direct law enforcement services to over five hundred thirty-three thousand King County residents, and

WHEREAS, although county crime trends overall are stable and, for some crime types have decreased, the county has seen a significant increase in crime related to gang activity, and

WHEREAS the sheriff's office reports that gang-related crime increased one hundred sixty-five percent in 2006 over gang-related crime reported in 2005. In addition, gang-related crime in the first quarter of 2007 has shown increases of over one hundred forty percent compared to the same period last year suggesting that this type of crime is a long-term and growing public safety problem, and

WHEREAS, gang-related crime has a significant impact on communities because of the violent nature of the crimes and is also restricted to identifiable "gang members," law enforcement agencies have used specialized units to suppress and eliminate gang activities within communities. The use of gang suppression units is considered a best practice with known positive results. The Seattle police department currently has a permanent gang unit, and

WHEREAS the sheriff's office has had a permanent gang unit, but budget issues forced the elimination of the unit several years ago, and

WHEREAS, the sheriff's office recognizes the need to address the gang crime problem within the county, the sheriff has reorganized existing resources to establish a gang suppression unit that works with other police agencies and the state department of corrections. Nevertheless, the resources used in the unit have been loaned from other units and other vital sheriff responsibilities are not being addressed;

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

It is the intent of the council that the sheriff's office have a gang suppression unit to ensure public safety so long as that funding does not jeopardize critical prevention,

intervention and reentry assistance programs aimed at reducing gang involvement and criminal activity in King County.