



LARRY PHILLIPS
Metropolitan King County Council
District Four

January 4, 2008

The Honorable Ron Sims
King County Executive
701 5th Avenue, Suite 3210
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Timing for vote-by-mail elections

Dear Executive Sims:

Thank you for your response to Council Motion 12564. Your report, "Status of certification of Premier Elections Solutions tabulation system," dated December 31, 2007, provides a compelling argument against King County transitioning to vote-by-mail (VBM) elections in 2008 using our current tabulation equipment.

While your report recommends an alternative--implementing VBM in 2008 using new Premier Election Solutions tabulation equipment--I understand that federal certification of this new equipment has been further delayed. This current delay, the most recent in a series of delays, has created overwhelming uncertainty about when this tabulation equipment will be certified and ready for use. **Given uncertainty over the readiness and reliability of new equipment and the infeasibility of using current equipment, I urge King County Elections to delay VBM until 2009.**

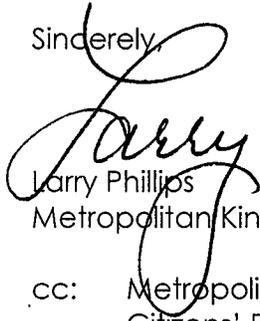
As a matter of policy, I strongly support VBM as the best way to streamline King County's elections system. However, I have always maintained that our transition to VBM must occur while ensuring accurate, secure, and transparent elections. With known limitations on current and yet-to-be certified new equipment, it does not appear that King County can confidently move forward with VBM in 2008.

King County initially set an optimistic goal of achieving VBM in 2008; as we near this goal, it now appears logistically difficult to achieve. Where accuracy of elections is concerned, we cannot afford to make any mistakes. You, elections staff and the Council have all worked too hard to regain the public's trust in elections to take unnecessary risks. Furthermore, making the policy decision now to delay VBM until beyond 2008 will reduce uncertainty and allow elections staff to fully prepare for the 2008 general election using the county's current dual system.

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Thank you again for your thoughtful analysis of this issue and responsiveness to Council Motion 12564. Tremendous progress has been made in election reforms at King County since 2004, and I believe we share the commitment to continue this progress and become a model jurisdiction for the conduct of elections. We should make the decision now to delay VBM until 2009, or until any date that our commitment to voters of accurate, secure, and transparent VBM elections can be confidently delivered.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry", written over the printed name and title.

Larry Phillips
Metropolitan King County Council, District Four

cc: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers
Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee