

# REFORMING HEALTH CARE

Facing projections that health care costs at King County would double in less than seven years (from \$144 to \$300 million), Executive Sims convened the King County Health Advisory Task Force in 2003, a broad group of health professionals, academics, business, labor and government leaders to develop new strategies to slow escalating costs and improve quality in health care. On their recommendation Executive Sims has enacted, a bold two-track strategy for combating the crisis, making King County a national leader in health care reform.

**Track 1: Improving health care for King County employees and their families** – The county will control costs through wellness-based benefit plans that are based on proven strategies including:

- Collaboration with labor to reduce cost trends by one third.
- Encouraging employees to make healthy life changes.
- Enhancing disease management programs that produce the best results.

Executive Sims has announced a Joint Labor/Management agreement for the 2007-2009 King County health plan that gives incentives for employees and their families to get healthy and stay healthy.

**Track 2: Acting regionally to create a new approach to health care** – Executive Sims' work on the health care problem



brought him to the realization that a regional approach was essential to deal with the systemic nature of both the quality and cost problems surrounding health care delivery.

Sims led the formation of the Puget Sound Health Alliance with purchasers, insurers, health care providers and health care professionals. By March 2005, 34 members covering more than 335,000 individuals were represented including King County, UW Medicine, Premera Blue Cross, Starbucks, Washington Mutual, and others. Members committed to a partnership in managing health, making health care decisions based on what has been proven to work and slowing the rate of increase in health care costs.

Alliance participants agree to measure and share health care quality data, which will be housed in an information repository containing clinical care treatment guidelines and tools for all members to use, while protecting patient confidentiality and privacy

The entire Puget Sound region will benefit as the Alliance works together to improve health, improve quality and, in so doing, decrease the overall burden of illness. For more on the Puget Sound Health Alliance visit: <http://www.govlink.org/psha/>.

**King County Executive Ron Sims and leaders from the health care community announce the formation of the Puget Sound Health Alliance.**