



Snohomish County Council

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Council members (425) 388-3494

Council Gives Taxpayers a Million Dollar Day

A budget control initiative implemented by the Snohomish County Council last year gave taxpayers a nearly \$1 million savings today. As a result of the efforts of the council's Finance and Economic Development Committee, county agencies absorbed enough cost in their 2003 budget to fund almost all of the county's cost of living wage adjustment to workers.

"This is a great example of making county managers accountable for the taxpayers' money," said Council member Kirke Sievers, chair of the Finance and Economic Development Committee. "County workers received a fair pay increase and county taxpayers received the fiscal restraint that has left almost \$1 million in our reserves."

County Council Chair John Koster said, "This savings is the result of the constant effort the Council puts in managing our citizens' taxes. We are constantly mindful that it's the people's money, not government's."

Council Law and Justice Committee Chair Jeff Sax said, "Nearly \$600-thousand in savings came from encouraging efficiencies in our law and justice system. The final cost of COLA adjustments was significantly less because of the efforts that these departments went to in absorbing these costs internally."

"Many of these departments came to us last year and said they would be over budget," said Dave Gossett, the head of the Council's Operations and Performance Audit Committee. "We asked them to wait and economize. They did and today the taxpayer is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars compared to what would have happened last fall."

Council Vice Chair Gary Nelson said, "Using the public's money wisely is a priority of this government. The council challenged our agency managers to use the money more wisely and they have."

For years the county has set aside money in its reserves to pay for the annual cost of living adjustment to county workers. For many, that is tied to 90% of the consumer price index for this area. In the past, that money was almost automatically transferred to agency budgets after the first quarter of the year.

In May of 2003, the council rejected that automatic transfer and challenged departments to live within their means. That challenge resulted in \$971,566 in savings. The council on Wednesday approved a transfer for the balance of the cost of living adjustment totaling just \$271 thousand dollars.

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