



Snohomish County Council

NEWS RELEASE

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County Council votes unanimously to place moratorium on executive's contract signature authority

Responding to concerns about the potential cost of a county-sponsored event to celebrate the launch of the Boeing 787, the County Council today limited for the next 60 days the Executive's ability to sign contracts in amounts over \$5,000. Currently the Executive may sign contracts in amounts up to \$50,000 without Council approval.

"We felt this was the only prudent step to take given the Executive's unwillingness to talk about how much of the public's money he is planning to spend on the event" said Council Chair Dave Gossett. "Estimates from others in the community who are familiar with planning efforts have placed the cost at \$250,000 or more. If commitments are being made to use county funds for any of that amount, the Council and the public have the right to know."

Since rumors of a county-sponsored event surfaced several weeks ago, County Council members have attempted without success to obtain information from County Executive Aaron Reardon and his deputy, Mark Soine regarding what type of event is being planned and how it will be paid for. Mr. Soine has appeared before the Council on three occasions since March 26, and each time has declined to provide specific information citing a need for confidentiality. "I am surprised and disappointed by the continued refusal of the Executive's office to provide us with basic information" said Council member Dave Somers.

The action restricting the Executive's signature authority for a period of 60 days was enacted through an emergency ordinance. Emergency ordinances take effect immediately and require four affirmative votes. They are not subject to Executive veto. "We hope that during the next 60 days the Executive will be more forthcoming about plans for the event and the sources of any funding" said Council member Kirke Sievers.

"We support holding an event that would allow the community to recognize Boeing and to share in the celebration of this important milestone", added Council member John Koster, "but there is no confidentiality when it comes to spending taxpayer money."

"We believe this step is necessary to ensure that there is adequate oversight for the use of public funds. In our role as the fiscal stewards for the county it is the responsibility of the Council to set the course for all financial activities", said Council member Gary Nelson. "It is the Executive's job to follow the direction set by the Council."