

King County Councilmember Bob Ferguson



2009 Council Budget Priorities

The Council established public safety, health, and quality of life as its priorities for 2009. Here are examples of how we met those priorities:

Public safety

The criminal justice system accounts for 70% of general fund dollars. The Council's leadership team worked extensively with the Sheriff, judges, public defense representatives, and the Prosecuting Attorney to protect the public safety system. As a result, the adopted budget:

- **Sheriff:** restores funding for 19 deputies, including drug, firearm, and gang task forces, major accident detectives, and community storefront-precinct officers.
- **Superior Court:** funds Unified Family Court and Drug Diversion Court.
- **District Court:** funds Mental Health Court.
- **Community Corrections:** funds programs that lower crime rates and reduce recidivism.
- **Juvenile Justice:** funds the "Step-Up" program to help families deal with domestic violence committed by juveniles.
- **Public Defense:** preserves current public defense standards.



Bob worked closely with Sheriff Sue Rahr (above) and other officials to make sure the budget protects public safety, public health, and quality of life.

Public health

Bothell's Northshore Public Health Center faced closure in the Executive's proposed budget. The Council's adopted budget restores full-year funding for the Center and keeps all of King County's 10 public health centers open.

With approximately 150,000 uninsured people in King County, the Northshore Public Health Center serves the second highest number of uninsured patients among King County's public health centers. Annually, the health center provides 3,600 family planning visits and 10,500 maternity support visits. Funding was also restored for:

- Immunizations for vulnerable populations;
- Tuberculosis prevention and control; and
- Community programs to keep kids healthy and safe.

Dear Neighbor:

This was my third year on the Council's Budget Leadership Team and given these financially uncertain times, adopting the 2009 King County Budget was a particular challenge. Due in part to current economic conditions, King County faced a \$93 million shortfall in its \$662 million general fund for 2009. The general fund pays for critical day-to-day operations, including public health, criminal justice, and human services. To fill this shortfall, we had to make difficult decisions about service priorities.

On November 24, the Council unanimously adopted a balanced budget that prioritizes public health, safety, and quality of life. The bipartisan Budget Leadership Team, which crafted the adopted budget, scrubbed the Executive's proposal for savings, delayed non-essential capital projects, and cut lower priority expenditures. For example, I proposed cutting:

- \$553,000 from unfilled public health administrative positions;
- \$104,000 from a project to archive Kingdome videos;
- \$140,000 from heating and lighting costs in county buildings; and
- \$345,000 from a voicemail replacement project.

By doing so, we did not raise taxes and:

- Maintained funding for all public health centers;
- Restored funding for 19 Sheriff's deputies; and
- Funded family, drug, and mental health courts.

Despite these efforts, we were unable to fund many critical programs, and without new revenue tools from Olympia, the county faces more cuts in 2010. However, I am proud that the 2009 budget protects public health, safety, and quality of life.

Wishing you the best in this New Year,

Bob



King County

Quality of life

County residents enjoy a high quality of life with access to parks, public transportation, and human services. The adopted budget helps maintain that quality of life by:

- Fully funding the King County Board of Appeals to ensure timely processing of property tax appeals;
- Investing millions in human services programs, such as domestic violence prevention and senior services;
- Protecting transit service from cuts; and
- Continuing expansion of parks and open space.

Budget questions?

For more budget information, please visit my website www.kingcounty.gov/ferguson.



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2009 County Council Budget Update

What Happens in 2010?

While the Council's budget protects many critical services, challenges remain. Important programs, including communicable disease investigations and family planning services, are only funded for part of 2009.

With sales tax projections showing a continued decline and property tax revenue capped at 1% growth, the county's two major funding sources are insufficient to meet the demand for county services. In 2010, the county faces an additional \$40.8 million budget shortfall and \$62.3 million in 2011. More cuts will be necessary to close these shortfalls.

Over the next year, the county will take a hard look at expenditures and find new ways to yield savings. King County will work with our legislators in Olympia to develop additional revenue sources, and we will continue to develop partnerships with cities and other entities.



In Shoreline, Laura Jackson addressed the Council about the importance of restoring funding for public health.

Metro Funding Update

As a regular commuter on the 41 bus from Northgate, I understand the importance of bus service in King County. Metro is facing its own budget challenges due to the fuel spike this past summer and the impact of the recent economic crisis on local sales tax revenue, which is Metro's main source of funds. For 2008-2009, Metro identified an \$83 million budget gap, with a \$90 million annual gap in future years.



To close the gap, the Executive proposed increasing fares by \$0.50, draining reserves, and borrowing from other funds dedicated to fleet replacement. Under this plan,

without new revenue options, transit service would be significantly cut in 2011.

I disagreed with this approach. Before asking riders to pay a \$0.50 fare increase, Metro needed to bring its spending down to match its revenue. My colleagues concurred, and we identified an additional \$43.7 million in cost-savings and efficiencies, including:

- Reducing Metro's annual operating expenses by \$28.2 million, or 5% of its \$600 million budget. Much of these savings will be realized by locking in recently reduced fuel prices.
- Scaling back or deferring an additional \$12.8 million in non-critical capital projects.

By cutting these expenditures, only \$10 million of reserve funds will be used to close the gap, rather than \$69 million proposed by the Executive. These savings give Metro and the community time to prioritize services and spending outside of the pressure of the budget process.

Additionally, I sponsored legislation requiring an audit to evaluate Metro's performance efficiency. With the adopted budget, we expanded this audit to look in-depth at the entire transit agency, giving Metro independent data to help achieve long-term savings.

A fare increase is still necessary to keep our buses running. Adult and Access rider fares will increase by \$0.25 on February 1, 2009. A second \$0.25 increase for adult fares will be implemented on January 1, 2010, and fares for seniors and persons with disabilities will increase by \$0.25 at that time. In total, the additional \$0.50 will generate \$22 million annually.