



King County

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WILSON CALLS FOR NEW TOOLS ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Seattle, January 4, 2016– Declaring that “We will aggressively pursue tools to help with the affordable housing crisis in King County,” King County Assessor John Wilson embraced an activist role Monday following his oath of office at the Kent Senior Center. “We cannot have an economically sustainable community if we do nothing about affordable housing,” Wilson said. “That’s why my team has been busy since the election to shape and advance our Affordable Housing Tax Exemption idea. We will be in Olympia this month to urge state lawmakers that we need more tools in the housing affordability toolkit.”

Washington State Supreme Court Justice Chief Justice Mary Yu administered the oath to Wilson, who also addressed the needs of senior citizens at risk of losing their homes due to high property taxes. Noting that the number of elderly citizens registering for the state’s low-income tax exemption program has declined in each of the past four years, the county’s newly elected assessor stated that “Today, in a county of more than 2 million residents, we have only a little over 17,000 people registered. We are going to change that.” Wilson said he will mount an aggressive effort to inform and sign-up seniors for the tax exemption. “We must not stand idly by while seniors risk losing their homes just because they do not know about and have not taken advantage of this property tax exemption,” he said. “This includes disabled veterans too,” he added.

Wilson also raised the touchy issue of increasing reliance on the property tax to fund off-budget services. “Our tax system is fundamentally flawed,” he observed. “As we struggle to fund vital services I worry we’re setting stage for a public backlash. “Generous local voters have passed property tax levies for transportation, parks, emergency radios, Best Starts for Kids,” he continued. “But our reliance upon the property tax carries a steep price: adding to the housing affordability problem, income disparity that

erodes the well-being of an already embattled middle class and the risk of voter disapproval and hobbling public services. I worry, that someone will decide the solution is some blunt force anti-tax initiative that might pass statewide but cripple us in King County.” The complete text of Wilson’s address is available on the Department of Assessments website: www.kingcounty.gov/assessor

The King County Assessor's office dates back to the mid-1800's when Washington was still a territory. Today, the office of the Assessor handles assessments of more than 660,000 residential and commercial parcels in King County valued at \$388 billion in 2015.

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