



King County

News Release

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Contacts: Christine Lange, 206-263-9752
Kris Faucett, 206-652-9506

Executive Constantine, Flood Control District praise signing of legislation protecting flood funds City Mayors join Constantine, Patterson in thanking Legislature for work after Governor signs EHB 1969

King County Executive Dow Constantine and King County Flood Control District Chair Julia Patterson today joined city mayors in thanking the state legislature and Gov. Christine Gregoire for passage of EHB 1969, which protects critical funding for flood risk reduction efforts. The bill was signed today in Olympia in a ceremony with Governor Gregoire.

"We worked together as a region to preserve this important tool that will protect people and businesses throughout King County from floods," said Executive Constantine. "I am pleased to see the overwhelming support in the state legislature for this bill, and I thank Governor Gregoire for signing it today."

"I am extremely grateful to the Governor and the Legislature for their support of EHB 1969," said Chair Julia Patterson. "Their actions preserve \$72 million in critical funding that allows the Flood Control District to continue maintaining and improving flood protection facilities, safeguarding our residents, their property, and the state's economy. Recent flooding, levee breaches, and mandatory evacuations along the Mississippi River underscore the importance of proactive actions to reduce flood risks to people and property."

Falling housing prices and a state cap on property taxes were threatening the Flood Control District's ability to collect taxes for much-needed flood risk reduction projects.

The bill exempts the Flood Control District from the property rate tax cap by protecting up to 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for countywide flood districts (King County's district currently collects 11 cents per \$1,000). As a result, the Flood Control District will be able to continue to collect revenue in 2012-13 and won't have to stop or delay necessary flood-protection projects. It will also enable the Flood Control District to leverage approximately \$10-15 million in additional federal funds.

"Although the City of Kirkland itself is not vulnerable to river flooding, we understand the regional importance of flood control and vigorously supported House Bill 1969," said Kirkland

Mayor Joan McBride, who serves as the co-chair for the Flood Control District Advisory Committee. "Floods affect everyone, posing risks to public safety and to regionally important employment centers and transportation corridors. Without this bill, critical flood control projects already underway would have been stopped or delayed and we simply could not afford to take that chance. Kirkland applauds the leadership of Representatives (Larry) Springer and (Bob) Hasegawa for co-sponsoring this legislation. Enacting this legislation allows the King County Flood Control District to continue facilitating a proactive regional approach to flood control and continue to provide funds to support and improve the county's flood protection facilities."

Mayors from many cities made trips to Olympia to testify on behalf of the bill, including Snoqualmie Mayor Matt Larson. "I am very thankful to the Governor and State Legislature for supporting this bill, said Mayor Larson. "The flood district not only works to protect significant regional economic interests and thousands of citizens from the devastating and long-lasting effects of flooding, but its activities save all taxpayers millions of dollars in avoided costs. This bill will allow the flood district to refocus fully on its valued mission."

"Retaining the Flood Control District as a resource is critical for the repair of the Green River levees. Those levees protect the nation's 4th-largest warehouse distribution center in the United States; an area that's responsible for 1/8th of the entire Gross Domestic Product of the State of Washington," said Kent Mayor and Chair of the Flood Control District Advisory Committee Suzette Cooke. "We greatly appreciate the work of the Legislature, and the support of Governor Gregoire. This bill is a win-win for residents, businesses and the state."

The bill allows for funding for Green River levee projects, including an upgrade to the Boeing Levee, the Hawley Road Levee, and the Reddington Levee. This work will occur on the 19 miles stretch of the Green River system that flows through South King County and adjoins one-eighth of the entire Gross Domestic Product of Washington State, and is home to many residents.

"This legislation helps protect the economic vitality of our region and its passage is very important news for all the businesses in Renton," said Renton Mayor Denis Law. "A special thanks to Governor Gregoire and all our local and regional leaders, community members and businesses for working together to make sure that we protect the County Flood Control District funding. The District's work reduces the risk of future flooding in the Green River Valley."

"A well functioning levee system is key to the economic health of our region and that is why I am so pleased that the State Legislature and Governor Gregoire have approved legislation protecting the ability of the King County Flood Control District to continue to receive property tax in this economy," said Tukwila Mayor Jim Haggerton.

"We appreciate the efforts of our Governor to secure the future of the King County Flood Control District and provide critical funding for essential projects," said Auburn Mayor Pete Lewis.

The loss of revenue would have meant:

- The delay of 45 capital projects deemed critical to the Flood Control District's 10-year plan. Of those 45 projects, 15 are projects that are currently underway and would have to be shelved for multiple years.
- Delays to several levee projects on the Cedar River that would put at risk critical infrastructure, including SR 169 and the regional fiber optic cable that carries financial transactions.
- Delays to levee projects in the lower Green River Valley that would mean that the region's economic engine would continue to be protected by levees that are only marginally suited to present-day flood management needs.
- Loss of funding for home buyouts and elevations that are currently at-risk and frequently flooded. Citizens would continue to be at risk in known problem areas in Snoqualmie, Carnation, and along the Cedar River.
- Loss of Opportunity Fund money in the amount of \$7.2 million for the 40 local governments in King County that currently receive support for critical flood and storm water needs.
- Loss of the Flood Control District's ability to successfully leverage external grants. The district anticipated a loss of at least \$10-12 million within the two-year period.
- And, finally, reduced capacity to respond to flood emergencies throughout the county.

The King County Flood Control District is a special purpose government created to provide funding and policy oversight for flood protection projects and programs in King County. The Flood Control District's Board is composed of the members of the King County Council. The Water and Land Resources Division of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks develops and implements the approved flood protection projects and programs. Information is available at <http://www.kingcountyfloodcontrol.org/>.

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