

PRESS RELEASE



County Council

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Cooper Proposes Moving County Corrections to Sheriff's Office

Mike Cooper
Dave Gossett
John Koster
Dave Somers
Brian Sullivan

Snohomish County Council Vice Chair Mike Cooper announced he will propose moving the county in the direction of thirty-five other Washington counties where corrections departments are managed by the elected sheriff rather than the county executive. The Snohomish County Corrections Department, under the executive branch, remains plagued by gross cost overruns that total in the millions of dollars, said Cooper.

M/S #609
3000 Rockefeller Avenue
Everett, WA 98201-4046
425-388-3494
FAX 425-388-3496
TTY/TDD 425-388-3700

"During this year, Sheriff John Lovick has demonstrated that his assertive and fair leadership can correct and manage significant corrections problems, such as runaway overtime costs and faulty labor relations," said Cooper. "In these challenging budget times when tough reorganizational decisions need to be made, no one streamlining measure is more appropriate than moving corrections management from the executive to the sheriff."

County departments are being asked to reduce the size of government through a budget cut of 2.5 to 7 percent, according to a memo sent last week by Council Chair Dave Somers. Sheriff staff testified before the council last week, laying out the systemic changes that have already been implemented under Lovick to save the county over \$1 million since he took office in January.

"This is a sheriff's office that proactively and independently made decisions to correct efficiencies long before any executive or legislative official asked," said Cooper, adding that with over \$1 million put back into county operations, Lovick's capacity to manage speaks for itself. Cooper praised the sheriff for accomplishing these savings without cutting personnel, without any pink slips.

Sheriff Lovick said he is equally willing to see this change occur. "Most county jails in our state are already under the direction of their sheriffs," he said. "My administration has worked hard to streamline operations and be fiscally responsible. We are absolutely prepared to oversee county corrections."

Cooper and Lovick said they will be working together to implement this change as the county's 2009-2010 budget is prepared by the council. Both said they believe the sheriff's office is the best place for managing the corrections department.

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CONTACT: Fred Bird
Council Public Information Officer
425-388-3873; Cell 206-200-2514
fred.bird@co.snohomish.wa.us