

King County Elections

From: Egan, Bobbie
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To: Duncan, Carolyn; Bascom, Brooke; Buck, Jim; Jones, Natasha; Huff Menees, Sherril; Bouffiu, Sean; Coppersmith, Megan
Subject: Kind of surprised the S.Times printed this garbage

For those of you who are not familiar with the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, they are an ultra conservative group out of Olympia who support requirements such as proof of citizenship to vote, and re-registration for all voters. They are funded, in part, by the BIAW.

Restore confidence in elections

By JONATHAN BECHTLE
GUEST COLUMNIST

King County Executive Ron Sims says he's close to hiring a new director for the county elections office, a revelation that derailed a move by County Council members for an elected auditor. Reasonable minds disagree on which is the best option. Most of us can agree, however, that when it comes to leadership, the county elections department doesn't need a repeat of the past three years.

Although former director Dean Logan was an elections procedure expert, he failed to inspire confidence in his staff or his constituency, showing an inability to lead effectively. As the Sims-appointed Election Task Force found, "the leader of the (election) division cannot alone make the kinds of changes that are critical to restoring public trust and confidence in our elections system."

The next leader must be someone who fills two roles: professional elections expert and someone who inspires the election staff to work with excellence and integrity.

So, to the new applicant for Logan's job, we have some suggestions.

Find good leaders. The elections office is much too big for the director to personally supervise everything, so the new director must create a solid leadership team. Logan surrounded himself with people such as Bill Huennkens, who had no prior management experience before King County, and Garth Fell, who helped falsify the 2004 mail ballot report. Election staffers surveyed in mid-2005 agreed that Logan's managers wouldn't communicate and couldn't motivate.

Be honest. Transparency about failures and needed solutions is imperative to restoring public confidence in elections. In 2004, Logan and Sims turned to their spin machine to explain why the elections division counted more than 1,000 illegal votes and why uncounted legal votes kept turning up. That strategy backfired, and public confidence sank under each revelation. The latest polls show that only 13 percent of Washington voters believe we've overcome the problems seen in the 2004 election.

Follow the law. Before coming to King County, Logan worked for the secretary of state; his responsibility was to ensure that state and federal laws were being followed by county election offices. His reviews of county practices contained warnings about the need to maintain audit trails required by state law. Yet in King County, he ignored many of those same rules, especially when accounting for mail ballots.

Realize the elections director job is political. Like it or not, the elections director is political. Logan's replacement must understand that he or she will be caught between the competing partisan interests of the county executive, the council, the political parties and many others. Logan was an elections expert, but

politically he often followed the lead of the strongest party, instead of pursuing election integrity.

Choose election security over convenience. The new director must close security loopholes, even beyond what the law requires. Logan didn't. A 2003 report by the Citizens Election Oversight Committee warned that provisional ballots were apt to be counted illegally. Logan knew about the report but didn't fix the problem. Sure enough, hundreds of provisional ballots were counted illegally in the 2004 election. Logan consistently looked for the easiest way to conduct an election, not the most secure. The new director must realize that security is not always convenient.

In sum, public confidence in our election system can't survive another Dean Logan.

Jonathan Bechtle is the director of Evergreen Freedom Foundation's Voter Integrity Project.

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