

Island County News Briefs

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Title
Board Opposes Initiative 1033

There is a measure on the Washington November ballot which, if passed, will have a detrimental effect on vital public services. Initiative 1033 will limit the amount of General Fund revenue for Washington's cities and counties as well as the state. Revenues would be capped based on 2009 revenue levels and only increased by the combined rates of population growth and inflation.

Even with inflation, future revenues would never be able to realign with market upswings since the base value would be set by the 2009 recession revenue level. That level reflects mass unemployment, human services reductions, law enforcement reductions, foreclosures, feeble retail and real estate sales and paltry interest rates.

While other states would be able to respond to favorable economic upswings, Washington would be lagging in financial development. Any rebound capital would be doled out as property tax reductions. These reductions would be minimal to the average property owner; however the cut would severely limit the ability for Washington State, counties and cities to provide vital and mandated public services, costing the public far more in the long run.

If I-1033 passes, revenues would be set at 2009 levels where rainy day funds were depleted not augmented. This means there will be little to no ability to establish reserves for future catastrophes. Emergencies occur regardless of population growth, i.e. storms, floods, disease, earthquakes and crime will occur with or without more people. Costly infrastructure and maintenance repairs will be beyond reach.

The long-term effect of the current maximum 1% annual property tax cap has created an already widening gap with inflation rates leaving local and state government challenged to deliver public services. I-1033 will only worsen this situation.