

the Courthouse Journal

W A C O U N T I E S . O R G

March 27, 2008
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*Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties*



National County Government Week – April 6-12

In 2008, the National County Government Week's theme is "Protecting Our Children." Washington counties can show their residents the many ways they work to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of children in sensible and cost-effective ways.

National County Government Week (NCGW) is an annual celebration of county government. First held in 1991, the goal of county government week is to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's counties.

There are activities at the national, state and local levels during county government week. More than 1,000 counties annually participate in NCGW by holding a variety of programs and events. These include tours of county facilities, presentations in schools, meetings with business and community leaders, recognition programs for volunteers, briefings on environmental projects, and adoption of proclamations.

WSAC will be featuring on its website county programs that support and protect children and encourage healthy habits. To be featured, submit your program description to Michelle Zahrly at mzahrly@wacounties.org by April 3. Photos are needed as well; please make sure that any photos of youth have been released by the parent or guardian. For questions, call (360) 586-4219 ext. 112.

A news release to statewide media will be distributed next week to promote NCGW. If you would like a local county media contact listed on the release or any county specific information included, contact Michelle by Tuesday, April 1.

To read more about the celebration, to access the National County Government Week logo and idea booklet, [click here](#).

GOOD NEWS: See the latest on the new County Training Institute (CTI) program on page 9. Core courses are available in April and June!

Want to post a job announcement on our website ?

Visit <http://wacounties.org/>

And click on the job pages for format & submission details.

The Courthouse Journal

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and the **Washington State Association of Counties**

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We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly / bi-weekly deadline is noon Wednesdays. Direct inquiries and correspondence to - *The Courthouse Journal*, 206 Tenth Av SE, Olympia, WA 98501

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U.S. Supreme Court Reinstates Washington's Top-Two Primary

Calling the decision an extraordinary victory for voters, Secretary of State Sam Reed and Attorney General Rob McKenna applauded the U.S. Supreme Court for upholding Washington's wide open, Top-Two Primary. The 7-2 decision handed down March 18 follows years of court battles over the primary and the rights of voters to choose any candidate on the ballot. In a Top-Two Primary, voters do not have to declare any party affiliation, and can vote for any candidate, regardless of the candidate's political party preference. In today's decision, the Court rejected the political parties' claims that this type of primary is unconstitutional.

"We took the people's case to the nation's highest court and the people won," said Reed. "This is a victory for the voters of Washington because our democracy belongs to them."

In the decision, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that overturning the Top-Two would be an "extraordinary and precipitous nullification of the will of the people."

On behalf of Reed and the State, Washington Attorney General Rob McKenna argued for the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' decision that struck down the Top-Two system. The case was McKenna's second before the U.S. Supreme Court- and his second victory.

"Washington voters have a long tradition of independent voting," McKenna said. "They told us they wanted the freedom to vote for the candidate of their choice regardless of party, and the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with them."

The State has been enjoined from using the Top-Two Primary since shortly after it was enacted. In 2004, the Top-Two Primary passed overwhelmingly as Initiative 872. Since then, Washington has conducted a pick-a-party primary, which requires voters to affiliate with one of the major political parties and limit their selections to that party's slate of candidates.

In *Washington et al v. Washington State Republican Party et al.* and *Washington State Grange v. Washington State Republican Party et al.*, the Court considered whether the Top-Two Primary is in fact a nominating process exclusively for members of political parties, or a winnowing process open to the public at large.

The Court concluded that the Top-Two Primary is not a nominating process, is not intended to pick each party's nominee for the General Election. Rather, the purpose of a Top-Two Primary is to winnow the number of candidates to two, allowing voters to select the two most popular candidates to advance to the General Election. The two candidates with the greatest support advance to the General, regardless of party preference and regardless of whether they are a party's nominee or preferred candidate.

Legislative Committee Schedules and Agendas:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

Among other things, the case focused on the ownership of the party designations "Republican" and "Democrat". Justices considered whether the candidates have the right to decide which political party they prefer, or if that decision should be left to party leaders. In essence, the court concluded political parties cannot prohibit candidates from expressing their own political leanings.

Washington will begin running a Top-Two Primary in the 2008 August Primary. The Top-Two Primary is overwhelmingly supported by the public and familiar to citizens who vote in nonpartisan elections in odd-numbered years.

Background:

The citizens of Washington enjoyed the freedom to vote for the person, not the party, from 1936 to 2003. That privilege is a fundamental part of Washington State's populist political culture which believes that people, not the parties, ought to control the process of electing their leaders.

Budget, Finance and Taxes

The Burden of Proof

The Legislature has struggled to pass or enact any meaningful Property Tax Reform. One area that is being constantly scrutinized is in the area of Board of Equalization Appeals. Can we make the system more taxpayer friendly when the taxpayer decides to appeal the valuation of their property?

This session and last session there was talk of lowering the burden of proof standard, and instead of adhering to the "clear, cogent and convincing" principle, maybe we need to move the standard toward the less comprehensive standard of "preponderance of evidence". Testimony was even presented that alluded to the fact that prior to 1971, this is the standard that we operated under and we should simply return to that standard.

Based on intensive and conclusive research by James P. Richmond of the Richmond Law Group PLLC, of Olympia, Washington, that statement is incorrect. Based on Richmond's research documents, his intent was to clarify the record with respect to the Burden of Proof. The following narrative includes specific Court cases citing his findings and substantiating his conclusion.

Until 1971 the courts applied a judicially crafted standard to property tax challenges that incorporated a presumption of due performance by the assessor that could only be overcome by clear and convincing evidence. When making or equalizing assessments, the assessor acts in quasi-judicial capacity, and the law presumes that he has performed his duty in proper manner. This presumption will be liberally indulged and will not be overthrown except by evidence that it is clear and convincing.

Ozette Ry.Co. v. Grays Harbor County, 16 Wash.2d 459, 113 P.2d 983 (1943). Ozette concerned whether the right of way cost of construction could be included in the valuation. There the court stated that the valuation needed to be so excessive that it constituted constructive fraud by the assessor.

In Ozette, the court cited eleven appellate court cases in Washington, going back to 1901, that imposed a constructive fraud and clear and convincing burden. The Ozette court then went on to say:

The mere fact that the assessing officers have proceeded on a fundamentally wrong basis or that the assessment is excessive is not of itself alone sufficient to justify the intervention of the courts at the instance of the taxpayer. Before a court of equity will grant relief against the acts of such officers, it must clearly appear that the assessment is so palpably exorbitant and excessive as to amount to constructive fraud or to violate some constitutional principle.

This judicially created standard was replaced by a legislative standard in 1971. RCW 84.40.0301. The 1971 legislation preserved the presumption of correctness and clarified the burden of proof by requiring clear, cogent and convincing evidence:

Upon review by any court, or appellate body, of a determination of the valuation of property for purposes of taxation, it shall be presumed that the determination of the public official charged with the duty of establishing such value is correct but this presumption shall not be a defense against any correction indicated by clear, cogent and convincing evidence.

The clear, cogent and convincing evidence standard “denotes a quantum of proof less than ‘beyond a reasonable doubt’ but greater than ‘a mere preponderance of the evidence.’” Davis v. Dep’t of Labor & Indus., 94 Wn.2d 119, 126, 615 P.2d 1279 (1980) (quoting Bland v. Mentor, 63 Wn.2d 150, 155, 385 P.2d 727 (1963)). The standard has been equated to that of “highly probable.” Id. at 126.

After enactment of that statute, the first case to discuss the presumption of correctness in any depth was Xerox Corp. v. King County, 94 W.2d 284 (1980). When Xerox was decided, a taxpayer had to prove constructive fraud on the part of the assessor by one of two possible methods: 1) prove that the assessor's value was constructively fraudulent because it was “palpably exorbitant or excessive”; or 2) prove that the assessor's value was constructively fraudulent because the assessor proceeded on a fundamentally wrong basis.

A 1983 utility violation case interpreting RCW 84.40.0301 said a taxpayer who challenges a property valuation for tax purposes must show by clear, cogent and convincing evidence that there has been an overvaluation, and that the overvaluation was either grossly inequitable and palpably excessive or made on a fundamentally wrong basis. Northwest Natural Gas Co. v. Clark County, 98 Wash.2d 739, 658 P.2d 669 (1983).

The next significant case to address the presumption of correctness and burden of proof incorporated into RCW 84.49.0301 arose in 1995. In that case the court noted that in some circumstances the burden of proof is a preponderance of the evidence. The case concerned the value of a pulp mill and deductions for pollution-control equipment. Weyerhaeuser Co. v. Easter, 126 Wn.2d 370, 381, 894 P.2d 1290 (1995).

In Weyerhaeuser the Washington Supreme Court interpreted RCW 84.40.0301 by distinguishing between the correctness of a specific value within an assessment and the correctness of an overall appraisal method or technique, as follows:

We adopt the following test to determine the appropriate standard of proof: (1) if a taxpayer overcomes the presumption of correctness on a specific value, the standard of proof shifts to preponderance of the evidence for all contested issues related to that value; and (2) if a taxpayer overcomes the presumption on the assessor’s overall approach or technique, *i.e.*, invalidates the technique, the standard of proof shifts to a preponderance of the evidence for all issues. The taxpayer retains the burden of persuasion at all times.

The court in Weyerhaeuser explained the first part of the test in more detail:

The first part of the test covers particular values within an assessment. Most appraisals of commercial properties involve several separate judgments on the value of complex assets. An assessor’s error on one decision does not necessarily invalidate the entire assessment, nor should it eliminate the presumption of correctness for unrelated judgments. Id.

Under the second part of the Weyerhaeuser test, if the methodology of the entire assessment is found incorrect by clear, cogent and convincing evidence, the presumption is overcome as to the overall assessment value, but the burden of proof remains on the taxpayer by a preponderance of the evidence.

The presumption of correctness applies only to an assessor's original valuation. It does not apply to the value placed on property by a county Board of Equalization. When an assessor recommends a different value for a new appraisal before the Board or Court than the value originally assigned, the burden becomes a preponderance of the evidence.

If (a) taxpayer challenging property tax assessment overcomes presumption of correctness on (the) assessor's overall approach or technique, standard of proof shifts to preponderance of evidence for all issues.

Weyerhaeuser recognized the importance of the presumption of correctness. By adopting presumption of correctness to assessor's original determination of value for property tax purposes, the legislature sought to end confusion and create clear burden of proof for taxpayers.

Conclusion:

The burden of proof in challenging property tax assessments since 1995 has incorporated the preponderance of the evidence standard for many purposes. The courts have retained and enforced the presumption of correctness. Prior to 1995 the courts enforced a standard that retained the presumption of correctness and a clear and convincing standard for burden of proof. The proposed House bill 2977 (2008 Session) appears to remove the presumption of correctness and changes the burden for all purposes to a preponderance of the evidence.

There you have the court and trial history to date. If any further changes are to be introduced, it should only come after long and careful study of the processes involved.

Courts, Public Safety, Law & Justice

Bills Signed Into Law by the Governor

To date, Governor Christine Gregoire has signed few law and justice bills into law but has many waiting her signature. The Governor has until April 5 to take action on bills that passed the Legislature or they will automatically become law. Once she does take action, a bill is assigned a chapter number in the session laws. An example is **SB 6933** admissibility of evidence, signed by the Governor on March 20, is now Chapter 90, Laws of 2008 and has an effective date of June 12, 2008. All bills are effective 90 days after the end of the Legislative Session unless the bill specifically states another date. Bills may also have different effective dates for various sections of the bill.

Bills that have been signed include:

2SHB 2713 DNA Identification, C 97, L 08

HB 2774, Amber alert, C 91, L 08

HB 2786, Level 1 sex offenders, C 98, L 08

HB 2999, Chief for a day, C 69, L 08

SSB 6184, most serious offenses, C 7, C 08

SSB 6400, incarcerated persons, C 104, L 08

ESSB 6437, Bail bond agents, C 105, L 08

SSB 6933, Evidence Admissibility, C 90, L 08

ESHB 1030, eluding a police vehicle will be signed on March 28. **E2SHB 2712**, Criminal street gangs has yet to be scheduled for signature.

Sex Offender Bills Signed by Governor

Governor Gregoire signed a number of bills into law last week including two recommended by a special task force that was appointed by the governor and was led by Kitsap County Prosecutor Russ Hauge.

HB 2713 adds several misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor sex crimes to the list of offenses that require offenders to submit a sample of their DNA. They include assault in the fourth degree with sexual motivation, failure to register as a sex offender, patronizing a prostitute, sexual misconduct with a minor in the second degree and violation of a sexual assault protection order. A one hundred dollar fee will be levied upon conviction for any crime included in the database regardless of when it was committed and regardless of whether the fee would be a hardship to the offender. Eighty percent of the fee must be transmitted to the DNA database account while 20 percent must be transmitted to the agency responsible for collecting the biological sample.

HB 2786 requires Level I sex offenders to be included on the statewide sex offender registry. Currently, the website contains information on all registered level 2 and 3 sex offenders and kidnapping.

Environment, Land Use & Resources

Comments Welcome for Washington Invasive Species Council Strategic Plan

The draft "Washington Invasive Species Council Strategic Plan" is available for your review and feedback at: http://www.rco.wa.gov/invasive_species/news.htm.

All comments are welcome, and the council is especially interested in the following:

- Does the plan present a compelling reason for action?
- What is the most pressing issue or action in the plan?
- Is a web-based clearinghouse for invasive species information a useful tool?
- Who are the appropriate people/entities to implement actions?
- If you are a land manager, how does the plan help you address invasive species?
- Do you foresee any unintended consequences of the plans recommendations?

Please send comments to Executive Coordinator, Clover Lockard (360-902-3088), by April 3, 2008. Comments are welcome either electronically to clover.lockard@rco.wa.gov or by hard copy to PO Box 40917, Olympia WA 98504-0917.

This document was developed through a collaborative process involving a wide variety of individuals and organizations. The council is grateful for their invaluable contributions and for their willingness to share their time and expertise.

Please note that the final version of the strategic plan will include an executive summary, definition of terms, graphics, side bars, case studies, and an appendix.

At the close of 2006 the council met for the first time to begin developing a strategic approach to prevent and control invasive species – non-native organisms that threaten Washington's environment and economy. A tactical and unified approach to invasive species management is needed and this plan contains strategies and action steps that address coordination of public and private efforts, access to invasive species information, prevention, early detection and rapid response, regulation and restoration of key areas.

The council is very interested in having your input.

Public Health & Human Services

Mental Health Bill Signed into Law

HB 2654 that creates a process for certifying community-based mental health services was signed into law. The use of Medicaid dollars for consumer- and family-run mental health services and programs are not currently allowed for under Washington State's Medicaid state plans. The bill requires DSHS to prepare a report, by January 1, 2009, on strategies for developing consumer- and family-run services. The plan must include amendment of the mental health waiver and state plan, and identification of funding and resources needed for implementation of services.

Association News

WSAC President's Message

March 27, 2008

With session having recently ended, many of you are recuperating from weeks of visits to Olympia or time on the phone working the issues with your legislators. Thank you for your energy and dedication during session promoting WSAC policy positions and county interests.

This is a good time to talk about my desire to mirror NACo's *Restore the Partnership* initiative in our state. *Restore the Partnership* seeks to reassert the role of county government as a legitimate and significant partner with the federal government in caring for the needs of the nation.

Similarly, I would like us as WSAC members to work together to strengthen our partnerships, both legislative and otherwise, during the off-session season. Our ability to nurture and sustain partnerships throughout the year in informal, relaxed ways helps us immensely during session.

At LSC meetings and conferences throughout the year, we'll discuss our goals and messages so that we can individually support WSAC partnerships.

Two key partner meetings have taken place in the last month. The WSAC Officers met both with the officers of the Association of Washington Cities and with the WACO Executive Committee to discuss common issues. Our conversations were wide-ranging and gave all of us the opportunity to get to know the others' agendas.

Our quarterly meetings with Governor Gregoire are another way for the Association to keep our priorities in front of key decision makers. At our most recent meeting, we discussed with the Governor her support of 2007 Storm funding for affected counties, WSAC's position to keep climate change efforts separate from GMA, and our Association's recommendations for the County Governance and Finance Study.

Speaking of the study, I have established an ad-hoc committee to continue work related to the legislative project and have appointed Commissioner Josh Brown, Kitsap County, as chair. The committee will focus on what WSAC's response and action plan will be to the governance recommendations in the CTED study. We are hoping to have Commissioner Brown moderate a panel on this issue at our June Joint District Meeting.

Regards,
Mary Hunt

Commissioner Munks won't seek re-election

March 18, 2008 - 09:02 AM

by Staff Report | Skagit Valley Herald

Skagit County Commissioner Don Munks announced today that he will not seek re-election to his District 1 seat in November.

Munks, 61, a Republican, said that since his heart attack this past October, his family has urged him to consider the impact on his health of pursuing a third, four-year term.

"The most important priority for me is my family, my wife Cathy of 44 years, our four daughters and son-in-laws, and our seven grandchildren."

"They have all said that the most important priority is my health," Munks said in an announcement issued this morning.

Munks said that he reached his decision "after much soul-searching and contemplation."

In his announcement, Munks said he had been weighing the "pros and cons" of seeking a third term for the past three months.

Munks was taken to Providence Everett Medical Center in October after suffering some chest pain. Doctors found a blocked artery near his heart and placed a stent inside the artery to keep it open.

After a week's rest, Munks returned to his duties as commissioner. But he said his family comes first.

"After my heart attack last October, they have reiterated their feelings that no job or elected office should be more important than seeing my family grow up and having the ability to enjoy the memories as they happen," Munks said.

Anacortes City Councilman Bill Turner, a Democrat, has already said he was considering a challenge to Munks for his western Skagit County commission seat this November.

After Commissioner Ted Anderson's defeat in 2006 by former Sedro-Woolley Mayor Sharon Dillon, Munks is the lone Republican on the commission.

Munks took some heat for voting with Anderson to approve the controversial garbage contract with Cimarron Transfer and Recycling. Anacortes city officials have also criticized Munks for backing the county's effort to assure water supplies for well users in the county's rural areas.

Training & Upcoming Events



County Training Institute (CTI)

Dear Member:

We are pleased to introduce the new County Training Institute (CTI) which includes an enhanced Certified Public Officials (CPO) Program. The 2007 Washington Legislature allocated \$850,000 in the 2007-09 biennium for the County Training Institute, which allows us to offer our members a comprehensive training program to meet many needs – those of elected officials, managers and supervisors, and county staff.

The expansion funds will enhance the existing CPO Program and the Newly Elected Officials Training, both in the range of courses offered and in the use of technology to deliver distance learning so more county officials and staff may participate in the program.

A Request for Proposal was submitted last summer to educational institutions in the state. A consortium of eight Community Colleges was selected for the contract, which allows us to access a network of training sites in numerous counties and take advantage of proven technology systems for distance learning.

In addition, the partners contracted with a project manager for the County Training Institute to ensure deliverables and performance measures are met by the educational provider. Please contact Tonia Sugarman, Contract Program Manager at (360) 586-4219 ext. 128 or tsugarman@wacounties.org with any questions you have about the Institute.

In order to assure the best use of the funds and provide quality training to our members, a brief survey will be sent to elected officials and affiliate organizations in a few days and we thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the survey and forward to those that may be interested in providing input.

For those that want to complete their CPO training, the CTI will be offering two core courses coming up in April and June. Please visit our new website at www.countytraininginstitute.com to find out more and register on line. We would greatly appreciate the addition of our website link to your county intranet.

The CTI partners are Washington Association of County Officials, Washington State Association of Counties, Washington Counties Risk Pool and County Road Administration Board

Do you need core courses to complete your Certified Public Official (CPO) certification? The following courses are now available through the County Training Institute.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (4 Core CPO Credits)

9:00am - 4:00 pm

#CTI08S01

April 22, 2008 at

[Big Bend Community College](#) (Moses Lake)

#CTI08S02

April 24, 2008 at

[South Puget Sound Community College](#) (Lacey)

Program Overview

This course examines the importance of overall communication in your position. Through facilitated discussion and active learning, participants are informed about workplace communication and techniques. This includes exploration of intergenerational management, active listening, and approaches to effective engagement.

Topics

- Learn the mechanics and human dynamics of communication and how you can improve your effectiveness, especially in emotional charged engagements.
- Expand your ability to listen to others with intention, attention and attunement in a way that promotes trust and openness.
- Increase your ability to interpret non-verbal communication cues and body movements to more accurately understand the issues at stake.
- Identify yours and other's style of communication and the implications it has with successful communication.
- Apply newly learned communication skills and concepts to "real-life" situations you're experiencing in the workplace.

RISK MANAGEMENT (4 Core CPO Credits)

9:00am - 4:00pm

#CTI08S03

June 3, 2008 at

[South Puget Sound Community College](#) (Lacey)

#CTI08S04

June 5, 2008 at

[Big Bend Community College](#) (Moses Lake)

Program Overview

This course examines important legal issues elected and appointed officials should know relating to organizational and personal liability. Content will bring understanding to risk management functions, approaches to risk control, and claim litigation management in public entities.

Upon conclusion of this overview on risk management, participants should be able to understand various levels of risk exposures and management techniques:

Topics

- Define negligence as it relates to county government activities.
- Understand different types of liability including: vicarious, contractual and decision-making liability
- Identify insurance/risk management structures
- Understand exposures related to financial decisions.
- Explain several loss control techniques, including policy development, training, and self-assessment process.
- Acquire knowledge related to claims/litigation handling –
- Become exposed to the advantages and disadvantages of different types of risk coverage including self-insurance, commercial insurance, and insurance pooling

To register for a workshop and get more information call 360-596-5752 or visit

<http://countytraininginstitute.org/training.html>.

Creating Cooler Communities: Municipal Responses to Climate Change

Climate change has been recognized as "the defining environmental challenge of our generation." Washington's local governments and citizens have diverse perspectives regarding the issue of climate change. A growing number of local governments in Washington recognize the threats, challenges and opportunities posed by climate change and are working to mitigate impacts, adapt operations and services and create new opportunities for Washington State and its citizens.

The Association of Washington Cities' "Creating Cooler Communities" Workshop will be held on April 16, 2008 at the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center, 1500 Broadway Plaza. Designed for local elected officials and professional staff alike, this workshop will provide practical help for local governments to begin or to advance their response to the Climate Change Challenge. Using a mixture of general sessions, concurrent sessions and case studies, you will learn more about anticipated challenges and policy options to ensure the wisest use of scarce public resources; and obtain tools and resources to help you develop a response to climate change that is most effective for your community and region.

Topics will include:

- Emission Inventory and Tracking
- Transportation Management (fleets and VMT reduction)
- Using Green Technology
- Green Development
- Smart Growth and Climate Change
- Growing the Green Economy

The fee is \$125 per person. For more information and to register: <http://www.awcnet.org/Apps/currentworkshoplister.asp>

Washington Counties – [wacounties.org/Calendar of Events](http://wacounties.org/Calendar%20of%20Events)

Courthouse Ramblings

For the third year in a row, **Spokane County** is one of 35 counties among the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People – a designation awarded by America's Promise Alliance, the nation's largest alliance dedicated to children and Youth. Since 2005, the Alliance has sponsored the 100 Best competitions, which recognizes 100 outstanding communities across America – large and small, rural and urban – that are the best places for young people to live and grow up. More than 300 communities in all 50 states applied for the honor this year.

* * * * *



Kitsap County Auditor **Karen Flynn**, right, laughs as Kitsap County Sheriff Steve Boyer starts to give her his badge in the county commissioner's chambers Monday. Karen Flynn is retiring the end of this month as Kitsap County Auditor, the office she has held for 21 years.

Good Things

Commissioner Pearce Selected for NACo County Leadership Institute

Commissioner Paul Pearce, Skamania County, received word this week that he has been selected by NACo as the Washington Counties participant for the 2008 County Leadership Institute, in New York City May 28 – 31. Co-presented with New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, the 3½ day course focuses on personal leadership skills and a better understanding of local decision-making. Congratulations Commissioner Pearce!

Attachments

NEWS RELEASE

March 21, 2008

King of Spain to bestow Spanish knighthood on Lt. Governor Owen

OLYMPIA – More than 15 years working with the Spanish government on projects from arts to trains and even recognition of a historical fort in a far corner of Washington state has earned Lt. Gov. Brad Owen and a senior aide the highest honor the King of Spain can bestow on a non-citizen: Spanish knighthood.

The lieutenant governor will formally receive the title at an 11:30 a.m. ceremony and reception on April 2 in Senate chambers in the Capitol. One of Owen's longtime advisors on international relations, [Antonio Sanchez](#), also will receive the decoration.

"I am extremely honored to receive this prestigious title, but more importantly it is a tribute to the great relationship we have been able to maintain with the Spanish government, a relationship that has been of significant benefit to our state and its citizens," said Owen.

A number of ranking state dignitaries, including Governor Chris Gregoire, are expected to be in the ceremony. The list will include several other elected officials, both current and past.

Spanish King Juan Carlos I will not be at the ceremony but will be represented by Jose Pascual Marcos, ambassador to Spain (based in Washington D.C.); Manuel Pradas Romani, the consul general of Spain in San Francisco and Luis Fernando Esteban, the honorary consul of Spain for Washington state.

The ceremony will also be broadcast live on TVW, the state's public affairs network.

"Through the tireless efforts of these men, many thousands of citizens of Washington state and Spain have been given the opportunity to share their languages, history, culture and business opportunities," said Esteban. "Together they have built a pathway of understanding and a peaceful and prosperous future."

Examples of Spanish projects the two have helped foster cited by Consul Esteban include:

- Securing the high speed [Spanish Talgo train](#) for Washington state in the early 1990s. As chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, then senator Owen helped evaluate the train's feasibility for Amtrak, even riding it at his own expense when it was being demonstrated in the state in 1994. Sanchez visited the production site and helped lead the effort to ensure that the train sets would be assembled in the state. Washington was subsequently the first state in the nation to purchase the train, which began service in 1998 and continues to draw record ridership a decade

later.

- Bringing renowned Spanish art to the state, including the “Catalan Masters of the 20th Century” to the Tacoma Art Museum in 1997 and 1998 and the “Picasso Exhibition” in 1998. Esteban describes work by Owen and Sanchez as “pivotal” in bringing to the state prestigious collections of Spanish royal art and artifacts in recent years, including “Spain in the Age of Exploration 1492-1819” to the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) in 2004. That exhibit was visited by King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia of Spain.
- Coordinating a bilateral agreement with the Minister of Education of Spain and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to improve the skills and credentials of the 1,700 Spanish language teachers in Washington’s public schools. As a result more than 200 teachers were able to attend summer programs at the University of Salamanca west of Madrid. Owen attended the opening of the summer class in 2000 and gave a keynote address to more than 600 teachers from around the world.
- A decade of collaborative work by Owen and Sanchez that culminated in the opening of the [Cervantes Institute](#) at the University of Washington. The institute, one of just four such programs in the U.S., promotes the Spanish language and culture from Spain and Latin America. Also developed and funded by Spain was the establishment of the Spanish library and Center for Spanish Studies at the UW.
- The development of a memorial park in Neah Bay in collaboration with the Spanish consulate and the Makah Nation. Called [Fort Núñez Gaona](#), the park commemorates the site of the first European settlement in Washington state 215 years ago and also serves as a veterans’ memorial. The park was completed in 2007 and will be dedicated later this spring.

Other work includes assistance with the development of a Microsoft research center in Spain and a \$260,000 grant by University of Leon the University of Washington’s Department of Spanish and Portuguese to establish a teaching chair.

The title of knighthood has been received by only four other Washingtonians. They include Esteban; Mimi Gates, director of the Seattle Art Museum; former Washington Secretary of State Ralph Munro and Chiyo Ishikawa, chief curator for European art at SAM.

Elected in 1996, Lt. Gov. Owen is currently the longest-serving lieutenant governor in office in the country and, at 32 years, the second-longest serving elected official in Washington state government. He served two terms in the House then four terms in the Senate prior to his current position as second-in-command of state government.

For more information:

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Attachments

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