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May 23, 2005

County Council Selects Team of The Elections Center and Strategica to Conduct Independent Management Audit of Elections Division

The Metropolitan King County Council today voted unanimously to hire the combined team of [The Election Center](#) of Houston, Texas, and [Strategica](#) of Issaquah to conduct a thorough management audit of the [King County Elections Division](#).

The Election Center is a 21-year-old nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting, preserving and improving democracy, with more than 1,000 members drawn from voter registrars, elections supervisors, and elections directors nationwide. Also known as the National Association of Election Officials, the Center is considered the premier organization for professional training and certification of election and voter registration administrators.

Selection of The Election Center team is the result of legislation sponsored by Councilmembers [Bob Ferguson](#) and [Julia Patterson](#) and approved by the Council last month.

"Our election process is too important to be held hostage by politics," said Councilmember Ferguson. "The Election Center will provide us with a detailed, independent review of our Elections office and a road map for reform. Because they are independent, no one can argue with the results."

"This audit will separate fact from fiction and provide the most comprehensive and objective review of the county's Elections Division," said Patterson. "It is time to leave the poisonous political rhetoric behind and move forward with real election reform."

"The voters of King County are fed-up with politically-motivated spin and 'over the top' hype. They just want the truth," said Council Chair [Larry Phillips](#). "Our democracy depends on trustworthy and fair elections. This audit will finally give voters the chance to have their questions about the election system answered by an expert with no stake in the outcome of the contested governor's race."

The Election Center is teaming with Strategica, Inc., an Issaquah-based organization that provides strategic planning, performance measurement, process improvement, management audits and organizational design. Joint project managers for this audit are Ernest Hawkins of The Election Center and David Howe of Strategica.

Hawkins is a recognized and award-winning professional with 30 years in the field. He is the former Sacramento County Registrar of Voters. He has done similar work to review elections operations in South Carolina and Fulton County, Georgia, and sits on the advisory board of the Federal Elections Assistance Commission.

Howe is President of Strategica, Inc., and has 18 years of experience conducting management and performance audits with expertise in elections and benchmarking analysis. He has performed more than 70 reviews for states, counties and cities on the west coast, including Los Angeles County and King County.

Under an accelerated procurement process, a selection committee led by the King County Auditor reviewed the proposals and recommended selection of The Election Center team on May 20, with the goal of having the team begin work by early June.

The Election Center will review the operations of elections and voter registration practices and make recommendations for improvement or enhancement based on best practices in the areas of organizational structure; compliance with federal, state and local election laws; physical and operational security; workflow designs and management; internal controls; staffing levels and competencies; management levels and competencies; training standards and practices; policies and procedures; documentation; adequacy of facilities; technical and administrative infrastructure; redundancy of systems and procedures; and productivity and quality standards. The consultants will submit a preliminary report by September 1, 2005, and a final report by October 1, 2005.

"So many false accusations have been made since November that a fresh set of eyes on the entire elections process is necessary," said Councilmember [Larry Gossett](#). "The recommendations from The Elections Center will be independent, nonpartisan solutions that will assist the Council as we correct the flaws within the Elections Division."

"Even with the reforms underway in the elections office, it is vital to get a view of the progress taking place from an outside source," said Councilmember [Carolyn Edmonds](#). "This independent review will answer questions without the shadow of partisanship."

"This thorough, independent review will help us strengthen the Elections Division by providing guidance for future reforms," said Councilmember [Dow Constantine](#). "Citizens and policymakers alike will benefit from the unbiased information provided by a formal audit."

This audit will be independent of any other agency examining the Elections Division. It will not conflict with the reconstituted King County [Citizens' Election Oversight Committee](#) or the King County Commission on Elections appointed by the County Executive.

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