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Building a more inclusive civic engagement process through the addition of Amharic, Somali and Tagalog languages to the list of available online voter registration forms

WHEREAS King County is a diverse and dynamic community that has seen much of its growth since 1990 driven by immigrants; and

WHEREAS immigrants and longtime King County residents speak more than 100 different languages, and the 2010 U.S. Census sample found that more than 400,000 King County residents – nearly a quarter of the county’s population over the age of 5 – speak a language other than English at home; and

WHEREAS according to American Community Survey statistics from 2008-2012, King County is home to over 28,000 East African language speaking residents and over 26,000 Tagalog speaking residents; and

WHEREAS Amharic, Somali and Tagalog are among the top six (6) languages spoken in the Seattle Public School System; and

WHEREAS under the federal Voting Rights Act, an elections department must add a language when 5 percent or more of the voting-age minority population is not proficient in English, or when at least 10,000 people from the voting-age minority population are not English-language proficient; and

WHEREAS printed, hard copy versions of the voter registration form are available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese; and additionally, online printable voter registration forms are currently available in Cambodian, Korean, Laotian and Russian; and

WHEREAS King County government is dedicated to providing all of its residents fair and equal access to services, opportunities, and protection; inviting and encouraging public engagement; and reflecting consideration for cultural differences; and

WHEREAS King County government must continue striving to meet the highest ideals for socially just and equitable service delivery and engagement with the public while operating responsibly within budgetary and resource constraints;

WHEREAS the Democratic Party prides itself on being an inclusive, big tent organization committed to increasing all residents opportunity to be involved in and participate in the civic engagement process; and

WHEREAS the Democratic Party recognizes the value and importance of hearing all voices in our community’s civic engagement process, including those new to our community; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the 30th Legislative District Democrats, call for the addition of the Amharic, Somali and Tagalog languages to the list of online, printable voter registration forms available on the Washington Secretary of State website.

Approved on April 2, 2014 by the 30th District Democrats

Tim Burns

Tim Burns, Chair