

KING COUNTY INDEPENDENT TASK FORCE ON ELECTIONS

GROUND RULES

Adopted by the Task Force on 16 May 2005

Purpose Statement

The purposes of the King County Independent Task Force on Elections are: 1) Recommend to the King County Executive short- and long-term strategies to improve the County's elections processes; 2) Help restore public confidence and trust in the elections system; and 3) Produce a set of recommendations that could help build the foundation for King County to have a **model** election system in the country.

Proposed Ground Rules

Task Force Members' Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Each member of the King County Independent Task Force on Elections is an equal participant in the process and has an equal opportunity to voice opinions and contribute ideas.
2. Task Force members accept the responsibility to come to the meetings prepared for the discussions.
3. We commit to fully explore the issues and search for creative solutions that best serve the interests that must be addressed.
4. We recognize the legitimacy of the interests, concerns and goals of others, whether or not we agree with them. We commit to treating each other, and those who attend our meetings, with respect, civility and courtesy.
5. We will make a special effort to listen carefully, ask pertinent questions and educate ourselves about the interests and needs that must be addressed in a problem-solving atmosphere.
6. In view of the specific scope of the project and limited amount of time available, we will make a concerted effort to focus on the topics under discussion.
7. Each Task Force member commits to attending all meetings as possible. Alternates are not being designated in this process. If a member must miss a meeting, she/he is responsible for asking a fellow Task Force member to represent her/his interests and positions at that meeting. The member may also submit written comments to the Chair and/or staff that will be distributed to the others.

8. As the process unfolds, Task Force members should provide feedback about the process to the Chair and staff, including advising the Chair in determining when it is appropriate to meet in executive session.

The Chair's and Vice Chair's Roles and Responsibilities:

9. The Chair is a neutral participant who serves her fellow Task Force members by keeping discussions focused, ensuring that all points of view are heard, and conducting the process, including each meeting, according to the spirit of these ground rules.
10. The Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair when the Chair is not available and requests that the Vice Chair act in her place. The Vice Chair will also serve as an advisor to the Chair and staff. The Vice Chair is not expected to remain neutral on the issues.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Task Force's Staff:

11. The staff serves at the pleasure of the Task Force and is responsible for serving its members by assisting the Chair and Vice Chair in organizing the process and structuring meeting agendas, producing summaries of the key discussions, decisions and agreements of each meeting, preparing briefing papers and other decision-making tools, and advising the Task Force members as they address the issues.
12. The staff will write drafts of the report that the Task Force will present to the King County Executive. They will submit the drafts to all Task Force members for review and comment. Once the final version has been reviewed, edited and approved by the Task Force members, the staff will assist the Chair and the other Task Force members in determining the most effective way in which to submit the report to the Executive.
13. The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office will serve as a resource to assist and support the Task Force.

Roles and Responsibilities of King County Staff:

14. The County Executive has stated that the Task Force must remain independent of the Executive and Legislative branches of King County government. Therefore, the role of King County staff is to provide testimony to the Task Force if needed, background materials and information to enable the Task Force and staff to better understand the issues, and administrative support that the Task Force determines is appropriate to receive from the County.

The Public's Role and Responsibilities:

15. The Task Force is committed to conducting an open, transparent process; thus, its meetings are open to the public. If an executive session is required, the reasons why it is appropriate will be clearly defined, and the Task Force will agree that it is necessary before it can be convened.
16. The Task Force may determine it would benefit from presentations by or the opportunity to consult with the citizens and/or representatives of organizations in order to gain information and expertise. Task Force members will work with the Chair, Vice Chair and staff to identify and agree on their needs for such services. The roles and responsibilities of individuals who provide information and expertise shall be defined and agreed upon by the Task Force members prior to being engaged by them.
17. The Task Force may also receive written comments and requests from the public. These should be submitted to the Task Force's Chief of Staff who will work with the Chair and Task Force members to determine the most appropriate and efficient means to address them.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Subcommittees:

18. If the Task Force agrees, we will use subcommittees to ensure that the Task Force achieves its mandate within the timeframe provided by the County Executive, which is July 31st, 2005. Subcommittees will also abide by these ground rules.
19. If subcommittees are used, the Task Force will agree on their purposes, schedules and expected products. Subcommittee recommendations will be subject to review and discussion by the Task Force and, therefore, may be revised or set aside by the entire group.

Agreements and Recommendations:

20. Task Force members are expected to identify, consider, discuss and debate a wide range of issues, interests, information, perspectives and opinions before providing their recommendations to the King County Executive. Task Force members will make a good faith effort to reach consensus on their recommendations. Consensus is defined as the unanimous agreement of all Task Force members. Its use precludes the need for voting. At times the Chair may poll the group to gauge its sentiment or preferences, but no formal votes will be taken and recorded.
21. If a Task Force member cannot support the emerging consensus of the Task Force, it is her/his obligation to offer an alternative that not only achieves her/his interests, but appears likely to achieve the interests of the other Task Force members.
22. In the absence of agreement, Task Force members will agree on where they disagree. Meeting summaries and/or Task Force reports will describe areas of agreement and

disagreement. Every effort will be made to state all points of view accurately, clearly and fairly. Disagreements will not be presented in terms of members for or against, but rather in terms of the different options that Task Force members believe are available to the County.

23. All decisions and recommendations are tentative until the end of the process, at which time the Task Force will review them in whole before finalizing them. During the process, recommendations will be revised when it is demonstrated that new information, previously unavailable to the group, will improve their quality

Meeting Agendas, Summaries and the Final Report:

24. Meetings of the Task Force will be task-oriented. Draft agendas will be prepared by the staff, reviewed and approved by the Chair and/or Vice Chair, and distributed to all Task Force members at least five days before a meeting. Agendas will describe each issue for discussion and the purpose of discussing it, and will be accompanied by information necessary to support informed discussion.
25. Following the conclusion of each meeting (including subcommittee meetings), a summary of key decisions and agreements will be developed by the staff and distributed to each Task Force member. These summaries will be provided to Task Force members within forty-eight hours of the meeting's conclusion.
26. Task Force members are obligated to review the summaries for accuracy and alert the author if they find mistakes.

Dealing with the Media:

27. Task Force members agree not to characterize the Task Force's or other members' positions in the media. Each member may provide her/his own position or opinion, provided that it is stated as such. **If one of us speaks to a representative of the media, we will notify our fellow Task Force members as soon as possible and summarize for them our comments.**
28. The Chair will serve as the official spokesperson to the media on behalf of the Task Force on matters pertaining to the group's process. **To ensure that the process remains transparent to the public, the Chair will periodically provide status reports on the Task Force's process to the media in a format that she determines is most appropriate.**
29. If and when appropriate, a joint statement suitable for discussion with the media will be developed jointly by the full group, and the Chair will serve as the Task Force's spokesperson in presenting it to the media.

Final Report:

30. A draft report summarizing the Task Force's findings and recommendations will be prepared by the staff and distributed to all members for their review and approval. After approving it, the Task Force will submit the final report to the King County Executive and provide it to whomever else we agree should receive it.