

# City of Tacoma



## Special Election - Proposition No. 1 - Submitted by the City of Tacoma

### TACOMA FIRE DEPARTMENT MEDIC ONE - EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TAX LEVY INCREASE

**Ballot Title:** Shall the City of Tacoma be authorized to increase its PERMANENT regular property tax levy from \$.42 to \$.50 or less per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for continued and enhanced provision of emergency medical services by the Tacoma Fire Department?

**Explanatory Statement:** Tacoma's current EMS levy pays for the Fire Department's paramedic-staffed Medic One program and other emergency medical services.

This proposal would increase the EMS levy from the currently approved \$0.42 per \$1,000 of assessed value to \$0.50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2003. The additional funding would be used to increase the number of paramedic-staffed engine companies and increase the general level of medical training and support for the entire EMS program.

With voter approval in September 2000 of the \$0.42 permanent levy, Tacoma did not anticipate the need for additional levy elections for several years. However, State Initiative 747, which generally limits annual increases in property tax collections to 1% of the highest collection in the three previous years, has limited the income generated by the \$0.42 levy. To avoid levy elections each year, Proposition No. 1 proposes a rate increase projected to maintain and enhance Medic One services and the entire EMS program until 2006.

#### Statement For:

This 8-cent increase in the Emergency Medical System Levy will allow your Fire Department to ensure and enhance essential EMS services. For less than 65-cents per month on a typical home, additional Firefighter/Paramedics will be put on the street and the Department will increase firefighter training and provide added public education on Domestic Preparedness and Disaster Preparation.

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> changed the way we live. Your Fire Department is the First Line of Defense. They need to have the tools to provide the best service possible.

**Revenue Reductions** eroded the Departments ability to maintain their current level of service. This Levy provides enhanced services and will avoid the cost of annual levy elections.

**Vote yes to maintain and enhance vital Emergency Medical Services.**

**Vote yes to give your Fire Department the resources they need to do the job you expect and deserve.**

*Committee Members Include: Brian Sonntag, Norm Dicks, Harold Moss*

#### Rebuttal of Statement Against:

In fact, Washington tax rates are, on average, in the middle range of the fifty states.

In response to the News Tribune editorial, Fire Chief Eileen Lewis pointed out that a reduction in the number of firefighters was "Not recommended by the auditors at this time."

The eight-cent Levy increase is a minimal addition for a very important emergency medical service.

*Committee Members Include: Brian Sonntag, Norm Dicks, Harold Moss*

#### Statement Against:

Washington State has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest per capita tax burden in America. (*Census Bureau figures, Tacoma News Tribune, 10/11/2000 Page #A-1*)

Tacoma's property tax rate is the highest in Washington.

#### Why?

One reason is the City Council refuses to implement the recommendations of a independent performance audit in exchange for political payoffs.

#### The Performance Audit Man Cometh

Tuesday, May 7, 2002. Auditors from Carroll Buracker & Associates Inc. present the City Council with a 500-page audit of the city's fire department.

#### Guess What?

Thursday, May 9, 2002. The "Tribune" editorial board stated, "...auditors ... made 48 recommendations to improve department efficiency ... If all the recommendations in the report were carried out, the department would end up with 47 fewer firefighter positions as well as fewer stations. ... None of those efficiency moves would sit well with the firefighters union, which can be expected to push strongly for taking over private ambulance service in order to preserve firefighter jobs."

*Committee Members Include: Will Baker, Ralph Baldwin, Curt Mehlhaff, The Taxes Rangers*

#### Rebuttal of Statement For:

#### Liar, Liar, Pants On Fire!

**"Auditors said the moves would reduce response time and increase fire and emergency service to parts of the city ... the report says the department has too many engines, ladder trucks and ambulances."** (Tribune, 5/9/2002)

**Question:** Is State Auditor Brian Sonntag endorsing this permanent property tax increase – *that contradicts the recommendations of the performance audit* – in exchange for firefighter union support for his sister-in-law's campaign for County Auditor? [www.piercecountyinsider.com](http://www.piercecountyinsider.com)  
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