

SPOKANE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE SPOKANE AREA

December 1985

COUNTY GOVERNMENT UPDATE

December 1985

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COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDIES by the League of Women Voters of Spokane

The League of Women Voters of Spokane began to study county government options in the late 1950's with an overview of County Home Rule Charter, City-County Cooperation, City-County Consolidation, Annexation, Incorporation and Metropolitan Federation (not to be confused with the present Metro). City-County consolidation was limited to counties of over 300,000 population which eliminated Spokane at that time. A County Home Rule Charter gained interest for further study. During the 60's county charter studies were completed and resulted in a strong consensus in favor of a Home Rule Charter adopted in 1968, which was the time that King County was actually accomplishing the adoption of a County Home Rule Charter.

In 1970 the first Spokane County Government publication was completed and had a good distribution in the community. In 1972 the state enabling constitutional amendment for city-county consolidation was amended; population minimum was eliminated and bonded indebtedness limits were defined. The Spokane League immediately studied the consolidation subject and came to no consensus. There were still many legal uncertainties, and there continued to be a strong support for the Home Rule Charter.

During the 1970's there were additional updates on county government. In 1975 we reviewed the Home Rule consensus, elected freeholders from units and did a few exercises in the charter writing options of freeholders. In 1979 there was a study which examined county government structure for the provision of services under a series of enabling acts passed by the legislature. Many brief reviews of League position and explanations of County Home Rule were presented to units from 1968 to 1984, and the consensus continued to be reaffirmed at annual meetings.

In 1985 a new County Government Manual (replacing the publication of 1970) was completed. In addition to basic information about all county government functions it contains another review of the options: Home Rule Charter, City-County Consolidation, Annexation, Metro, City County Cooperation and Incorporation (pp72-76).

The following consensus was reaffirmed at Annual Meeting in April 1985. These positions are the result of the studies listed above.

Item 3. Local Government

A. City (1969, 1980)

2. Planning

- a. Support of measures to achieve the orderly physical development and growth of the city.
 - (1) Long range planning should be of the greatest consideration.
 - (2) Elimination of duplication of services should be effected wherever possible. Encouragement of cooperation with Spokane County to consolidate services.
 - (3) Successful planning for the orderly physical growth of the city of Spokane can be effective only if there is wide-spread citizen understanding and active citizen participation in formulating the plans. (1969)

B. County (1973, 1979, 1984)

1. Government

- a. Support a reorganization of County Government based upon consideration of:

- (1) Utilization of comprehensive long-range planning.
- (2) Consolidation of services, including cooperation and contracting of services, to eliminate over-lapping and duplication.
- (3) Deletion of unnecessary and outmoded units of government.
- (4) Adoption of County Home Rule Charter.
- (5) Inclusion of local League criteria for governmental structure.
 - a. Separation of executive and legislative functions, with a chief executive.
 - b. Appointment of professionally trained management.
 - c. A legislative body large enough to provide adequate representation.
 - d. A personnel system for county staff with clearly defined standards and policies and a board of appeal.
 - e. Appointment of all department heads possible under state law.
 - f. A system of checks and balances.
 - g. A single comprehensive budget.
 - h. Provision to guarantee citizen participation and protection of citizen rights. (1973)
- (6) Standards for the delivery of governmental services that include:
 - a. The establishment of a transit area beyond City limits with assessments extended to those who are served.
 - b. School and park planning that is coordinated with a County use plan.
 - c. Compensation requirements from new development for acquisition of school and park land.
 - d. Annexation policy that provides for balanced growth within the framework of a comprehensive plan.
 - e. A strong Regional Planning Conference & adequate staffing. (1981)

C. City-County (1975, 1969)

1. Fiscal Resources and Expenditures
 - a. Support measures which will promote greater citizen interest and participation in the total budget making process on the local level. (1975)
2. Public Information
 - a. There is an obvious need for effective two-way communication between city and county officials and the public. This is a dual responsibility.

D. Port District (1981)

The League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area favors additional study and dialogue with the community regarding the pros and cons of establishing a port district in Spokane County.

CURRENT WINDS OF CHANGE

Since 1968 the League of Women Voters of Spokane has been the one organization to speak out in favor of a County Home Rule Charter.

Early in 1985 a very positive climate for change began when the Spokane Valley

Chamber of Commerce and Spokane Area Chamber of Commerce adopted positions in favor of a County Home Rule Charter. These groups and the League began meeting to discuss implementation of our positions. Efforts were made to enlist other organizations to help form a broad-based coalition to work for a freeholder election early in 1986. Some positive response began to emerge when the winds of change presented obstacles.

Legal opinions emphasized that the freeholder election initiated by petition must wait until a general election, which then meant November, 1986 at the earliest. This put a brake on early momentum. Meanwhile the petition for a Valley City Incorporation appeared and captured the spotlight. Many community leaders became concerned about this movement, and spokesmen for city-county consolidation kept issuing statements of that persuasion. This has caused an erosion of the earlier unity in favor of the county charter.

As this is written, there is great uncertainty and mixed signals continue to thrive. Valley City Incorporation efforts face a delaying action in the courts. The Boundary Review Board ruled that the Incorporation petition should be placed on the ballot. Immediately that decision was appealed by Spokane Valley Fire District and citizen groups with the County Commissioners also entering as a friend of the court. The appeal charges that insufficient information (especially fiscal) was provided by the petitioners for incorporation. It is difficult to predict a future time-table because the court calendar will determine the next step.

Meanwhile the two Chambers of Commerce have not abandoned their interest in city-county consolidation, nor have they made official changes in their positions in favor of a County Home Rule Charter.

ISSUES AND STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

Spokane County government structure is out-moded and encumbered with basic structural inefficiencies. It was never intended to provide urban services or govern an urban area. Changes in the structure will require a new charter.

1. Checks and balances are lacking.
County Commissioners have both administrative and legislative power plus some judicial power as a hearing board.
2. Clear lines of administrative authority are missing.
Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Coroner, Sheriff and Treasurer are elected officials and have autonomy in their departments except for final budget approval.
The commissioners rotate chairmanship; single executive authority is lacking.
3. There is no single unified budget or fiscal control.
4. The three commissioner districts are pie-shaped, converging in the center of Spokane. Each commissioner represents over 115,000 people.
5. Additional service functions or revisions must have state enabling legislation.

6. There is no provision for a board of appeals, initiative or referendum; no way is available to amend county government on the local level.
7. The three commissioners are burdened with required service on many governmental boards.

Proponents for city-county consolidation emphasize delivery of services rather than structural problems.

1. The duplication of services.
2. The need to address regional issues with a unified single government. The proposed Coliseum, the sewer interceptor in the Valley, the Aquifer Protection District, the waste to energy facility, the international trade center, the water and sewer issues in the airport district are all mentioned as high on a list of needs.
3. There is a lack of unity in planning which makes it difficult to attract new business to the area.
4. The lack of similarity in city and county government structures is cited as a deterrent to efficient cooperation.

LEGAL BASIS FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The original constitutional provisions

The form for county government was authorized in the Washington State Constitution (Article XI) in 1889. Counties were created to be an arm of the state and mandated to perform specific functions. They were authorized to elect three commissioners plus assessor, auditor, clerk, coroner, sheriff, treasurer, prosecuting attorney and judges. They were given responsibility for property assessment, tax collection, election administration, licensing, administration of law and justice, building farm to market roads etc. No authority to administer urban services was mentioned because that was usually written into municipal charters.

As counties matured, urban populations did not always incorporate even though the need for urban services continued to grow. It became necessary for counties to seek enabling legislation from the state to provide various services which had not been mentioned in the constitution. Thus many state laws (Revised Code of Washington or RCWs) were passed giving counties the authority to perform functions such as health service, sewerage, water quality protection, parks and many others. The 1979 study by the LWV of Spokane explains these in detail.

Today Spokane County derives its authority from the constitutional provisions plus many state legislated enabling acts or RCWs.

The major amendments

In 1948 Article XI was amended by Amendment 21 which authorized formation of County Home Rule Charters and Amendment 23 which authorized a county of over 300,000

population to form a City/County Consolidation Charter. In 1972 the consolidation amendment was rewritten to eliminate the population restriction and to spell out the limits of bonded indebtedness. These two charter options will be discussed in depth along with other options.

It should be noted that non-charter counties may perform only those functions which the constitution or the many RCWs permit. In contrast, the charter counties write a local constitution (the charter) which may authorize any function which is not prohibited by basic state law.

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

A. Incorporation

Any unincorporated portion of a county containing a total population of 20,000 or more may incorporate as a first-class city. Such incorporations are subject to the conditions provided by the state constitution and by general statutes. Proposed incorporations may elect to be either (1) a noncharter code city or a (2) charter code city which becomes classified according to the provisions and options provided in 35A RCW, Optional Municipal Code.

The proposed Valley City Incorporation which met petition signature requirements is a noncharter code city proposal. Voters will have no charter to consider. The result is that the first city council to be elected will have many opportunities to set policy and precedent.

The incorporation proponents followed the constitutional process for placing the issue on the ballot through the Boundary Review Board approval. Before the County Commissioners set an election date, the Spokane Valley Fire District and citizens groups filed a court appeal of the Boundary Review Board's decision to approve the petition. No dates have been determined for court action.

Incorporation is not viewed as a solution to county government problems; it is part of the current political winds of change. It is generally conceded that efforts to incorporate were fueled by a frustration with county government which often cites the lack of representation from the valley.

The League of Women Voters has no position on this incorporation proposal. It should be pointed out that whether the incorporation succeeds or not, the structural problems of the county continue. Municipalities do not effect changes in county government structure, nor are they changed by a county government charter.

B. Annexation

"Annexation in Washington is the legal process whereby any unincorporated portion of a county that lies contiguous to a city or town may become a part of that city or town. The five methods of annexation available to cities in Washington State are provided for in 35.13 RCW. They are: (1) Election Method, initiated by 20% petition; (2) Election method, initiated by resolution; (3) Seventy-Five Percent of Property Value Petition Method; (4) Annexation for municipal Purposes; (5) Annexation of Federally Owned areas. Annexation for municipal purposes is an easy and direct approach, but may be used only when a legitimate

municipal approach can be shown, such as for a city park, water tower, or dump site. The statutes authorizing annexation of federally owned land are also of very limited application."

Thomas W. Fletcher, SRI International
p. 54 Alternative Government Structures
for the Spokane Area

Very little political action is moving this direction. Piecemeal annexations to Spokane have occurred through the years on an irregular basis.

In July 1985 the Spokane City staff, at City Council request, issued a report on possible expansion of City Boundaries. The primary focus was to answer questions relating to the delivery of services and financial impact upon property owners. The report contains a wealth of specific information which is a good resource.

The League consensus mentions annexation in item (6) "Standards for the delivery of government services that include.....d. Annexation policy that provides for balanced growth within the framework of a comprehensive plan.

No specific annexation proposal is in the current mix of possible change. It does exist as an option having little legal difficulty if the political winds should become favorable.

C. City-County Cooperation

Improvement in cooperation has been evident in recent years. It all depends upon the harmonious working relationship between City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. This cooperation may provide more efficient delivery of services without a large scale governmental change. The cooperation often involves an inter-governmental agreement which creates a policy making board on which both city councilmen and county commissioners sit. The extra boards make added responsibilities for the elected officials. Accomplishments in cooperation include such areas as Health Department, Airport, Air Pollution, Transit system, Agency on Aging, Public Safety Building and many others. Some attempts such as consolidation of the two planning departments failed to materialize for a combination of financial and political reasons.

Part 2. Planning a. (2) of LWV consensus on City Planning supports cooperation with Spokane County to consolidate services.

D. Metro (Metropolitan Municipal Corporations) - RCW 35.58

This act allows for the formation of a corporation of local units of government to enable them to deal with growth problems that transcend local boundaries. It is not a general purpose government because it is limited to six functions: water pollution abatement, garbage disposal, water supply, transportation, planning, parks and parkways. Membership in the corporation does not displace existing units of government, rather it is a corporation of already formed political entities and their elected officials.

In the State of Washington three counties have established metropolitan municipal corporations: King County for water pollution control and public transportation; Snohomish for comprehensive planning and Grays Harbor for public transportation. The success that King County has achieved in reversing Lake Washington's pollution and providing the Seattle area and its Central Business District with an effective mass transit system has received nationwide attention.

This option has received little attention here. It was considered for transit, but the Public Transit Benefit Area met our transit needs more satisfactorily.

E. City-County Consolidation

Article XI, Section 16 of the State Constitution provides that any county may frame a charter (subject to the constitution and laws of the state) for the formation of a combined city-county. The process is similar to County Home Rule Charter (election of freeholders, charterwriting, voter approval of charter) except that the process may be initiated by petition only, representing 10% of voters voting in the last preceding general election.

The constitution further provides that a city-county 'shall be formed by a majority vote of the qualified electors voting there-on in the county'. In the 1975 opinion of the Attorney General, this was interpreted to mean that consolidation would occur only county wide.

'The charter shall designate the respective officers of such city-county who shall perform the duties imposed by law upon county officers'. This again differs from the County Home Rule provisions. The Attorney General's opinion stated that the prosecuting attorney need not remain as an elected officer, but the duties he performs would need to be provided in the charter.

'Municipal corporations may be retained or otherwise provided for within the city-county. The formation, powers and duties of such municipal corporations shall be prescribed by the charter'. This section has also been interpreted by the Attorney General to apply to special districts, except for school districts which have been ruled to retain their autonomy because of a provision in Article IX Section 2.

'Every such city-county shall have and enjoy all rights, powers and privileges asserted in its charter.....a city-county shall be authorized any powers that are granted to either the cities or counties.' This broad grant of powers allows more flexibility in taxing powers and possibly in distribution of state monies (liquor tax etc.) than is currently available to either a city or county separately. Further clarification may be needed because no consolidation in Washington has taken place to test the law.

Substitute Senate Bill 4313 in the 1984 legislative session made the following effort to clarify Article XI, Section 16:

- (1) A city-county shall not levy an income tax.
- (2) The method of allocating state revenues shall not be modified for one year after a city-county is formed, but shall be distributed as if the pre-existing county, city and special purpose districts continued as separate entities. However, distribution of such monies, shall be made to the city-county.
- (3) The formation of a city-county shall not reduce, restrict, or limit retirement or disability benefits to those persons who were part of the systems prior to consolidation.

- (4) If a fire protection or law enforcement unit was governed by a provision for binding arbitration in collective bargaining, that shall continue.

Growing numbers of people are speaking out in favor of city-county consolidation, but no formal support organization is evident. The primary reasons for support center on the elimination of boundaries, less duplication of services and a better framework for solving regional problems. County Commissioner Grant Peterson has taken a leading role in outlining the city-county issues such as coliseum, solid waste disposal, sewers, aquifer protection etc. He states that the legislative hurdles are minimal.

In the 1984 study commissioned by the Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce, Jack Geraghty wrote:

"The question of consolidation of county and city governments is one which has been discussed off and on by some Spokane area civic leaders for several years. On the face of it, the idea of streamlining local government by removing artificial jurisdictional boundaries, merging municipal service functions, and bringing local functions under a single administrative structure would appear to have merit.

"The problem, however, has to do with the uncertainties of the actual consolidation process itself and the fact that there are no models in Washington State and few nationwide to follow.

"In actual fact, most discussion of city-county consolidation in Spokane area envisions merger of the City of Spokane and Spokane County with a focus on the county's urban metropolitan area including the Spokane Valley. The status of the county's 10 cities and towns other than Spokane is often overlooked in city-county considerations.

"Some of the many important issues to be addressed in the city-county consolidation process include:

1. What cities, towns or special districts should be allowed to retain their independent status (if any) within the new consolidated format?
2. Is it possible to differentiate between urban and rural service areas with a resulting difference in taxing levels?
3. What happens to the existing bonded indebtedness limitations of existing county and city governments as the merger takes place?
4. What type of legislative body should be created and should geographical representation be built into the system?
5. Should the consolidated government be non-partisan?
6. What happens to existing city and county personnel and retirement systems?

"While answers to some of these questions are addressed in the statutes, most are not. It would be up to the freeholders to resolve such questions during the charter drafting period. Obviously, there would be a major requirement for citizen education as the process proceeds.

"One thing is certain: the city-county consolidation process is flexible in this state and allows citizens to develop a local system that best suits their specific community needs."

Local Government in the Spokane Valley
Directions for Tomorrow p. 106

When Dr. Patricia Florestano, Director of the Institute for Governmental Service at the University of Maryland spoke to a local government forum in 1984 in Spokane, she made the following statement:

"Certainly we have learned that what will work for one jurisdiction will not necessarily work for another. Consolidation is one of several options to examine when erosion of the tax base, lack of planning, or overlapping governments necessitate reorganization. As one observer put it, 'no two consolidation attempts have been alike; few are even similar. For every one approved three or four have been rejected.'"

No city-county consolidation has occurred in the state of Washington. It was discussed in King County, but never put on a ballot. Vancouver-Clark County gave very serious consideration starting in 1972 when their inquiries led to Attorney General Slade Gorton's voluminous opinion on the legal ambiguities. In November 1982 there was a spirited election campaign in Vancouver-Clark County with the County leaders in favor of consolidation and Vancouver in opposition. The ballot measure to consider consolidation was defeated.

There are successful consolidations in Los Angeles County, Miami-Dade County, Metropolitan Toronto, Indianapolis-Marion County, Nashville-Davidson County, Jacksonville-Duval County, Baton Rouge-East Baton Rouge Parish, Hampton-Elizabeth City County (Va), South Norfolk-Norfolk County (Va), Virginia Beach-Princess Anne County (Va), Columbus-Muscogee County (Ga), Anaconda-Deer Lodge, Butte-Silver Bow. Larger consolidations such as Baltimore, Denver, New York and San Francisco have been in place since 1907. Some of the above were mandated by state legislatures without local voter approval.

Consolidation referenda failed in places such as Cleveland-Cuyhoga County, Metropolitan Milwaukee, St. Louis-St. Louis County, Tampa-Hillsborough County, Albuquerque-Bernalillo County, Portland-Multnomah County, and Salt Lake City-Salt Lake County.

Successes or failures in other states are not entirely relevant because they have different state laws. In Virginia, for instance, cities are not legally a part of the county.

The task here is to understand the Washington law and how it will apply to the local government in Spokane County. The process for the election of freeholders to write a city-county consolidation charter is very explicit. The freeholders will have some very broad powers in the actual structure of the government. They may or may not include small municipalities and special districts as a part of the structure; they have a number of choices in fiscal matters and taxation; they have free choice in the number and composition of elected officials.

According to the legal research by the staff counsel to the House Local Government Committee in Olympia, Steve Lundin, there is need for very little additional

legislation to clarify ambiguities in the enabling laws. Some authorities claim that there are grey areas which will require either court decisions or additional law when cases arise.

The actual consolidation will require a large task of organization. The city and the county are far from parallel in structure now, nor do these governments have like responsibilities.

<u>City only</u>	<u>Common to both</u>	<u>County only</u>
water purveyor	planning & zoning	property assessment
fire protection	streets & roads	tax collection
refuse collection	parks	administration of court
sewage treatment plant	police	admin. of elections
community centers/arts	building permits	auto licensing

This is but a partial list; however, it should point out the complexity of the consolidation especially in the area of water, fire and refuse collection where the county is served by many districts as well as some private companies. Some of the services to both have already been provided under city-county cooperation or creation of special districts. Some special districts work well; more such jurisdictions might add to the complexity and confusion of local government.

Advantages to city-county consolidation

1. City boundaries would be abolished allowing urban services to spread across the urban area.
2. Planning could be unified and regional solutions made easier.
3. More flexibility in financing and provision of services would be available.

Disadvantages to city-county consolidation

1. "Increased costs and taxation...Traditionally, government agencies tend to increase their per capita costs when their population size exceeds 250,000. Also, with increased taxation authority, tax and fee rates may increase or be applied in area not presently subject to such taxation."

Alternative Government Structures for Spokane Area
Stanford Research International p. 74

2. Uncertainty about the structure, small municipalities, special districts, and fiscal matters under very broad powers given to freeholders.
3. "Smaller governmental units, even if they are more numerous, may be more accessible, capable and efficient. Recent studies also show that bigger government is not cheaper. National surveys suggest that people want small and more accessible government."

To Merge or Not to Merge
League of Women Voters in King County p. 10

F. County Home Rule Charter

These charters are authorized in Article XI, Section 4 of the Washington State Constitution.

The Board of County Commissioners may call for an election of freeholders for the purpose of writing a charter or 10% of the registered voters who voted in the last general election may propose, by petition, an election of freeholders.

Freeholders must be elected from either legislative or commissioner districts and meet within 30 days to begin drafting a charter. Their meetings must be open to the public and should provide for citizen input. The completed charter must be voted upon by the entire county.

The charter must provide for the functions of government previously assigned to counties.

The charter may authorize additional service functions desired by the people.

There must be an elected legislative body of 3, 5 or 7, from districts of equal population. The prosecuting attorney and judges must remain elected officials.

All other elected officials may be either elected or appointed; a chief executive may be elected or appointed.

The charter may not conflict with state law and may not authorize a higher level of taxation.

It may organize the functions of government to provide for separation of powers, checks and balances, appointment of department heads based upon qualifications, an integrated budget and personnel policies. Other important inclusions could be the right of initiative and referendum, a board of appeals, periodic charter review and an amendment process.

Home Rule Charters in Washington

Five counties in Washington (King 1968, Clallam 1976, Whatcom 1978, Snohomish 1979, Pierce 1980) have Home Rule Charters in place. No two charters are alike, thus many examples are provided. See appendix for charter details.

Robert H. Pealey, Professor, Graduate School of Public Affairs and former Director, Institute of Governmental Research, University of Washington wrote:

".....there is wide agreement that the county (King) government's performance since the home-rule charter's adoption has been virtually "light years" better than that of the previous government."

"Washington Public Policy Notes", Inst. of Gov. Research, UW.

A King County Charter Review Committee wrote in 1971:

"The majority of the committee felt that the adoption of the Home Rule Charter answered the needs and problems expressed in the declaration of policy and purpose.

The citizen review process which looks into and studies all areas of county operation and permits evaluation is a valuable practice for the continuing health of local government, and should be encouraged. Unfortunately too few citizens are aware of the important internal improvements that the Charter initiated, and the money that has been saved under the new government."

A League of Women Voters committee evaluated the Pierce County Charter in 1985:

"Yes, Pierce County Government under the Charter is functioning according to expectations. The separation of the legislative and executive branches was considered the most important improvement. Nothing was worse than before. The Charter is an effective instrument; however, no one failed to make suggestions for change."

Five Washington counties (Cowlitz 1969, Kitsap 1971, San Juan 1974, Island 1976, Thurston 1979) failed to pass Home Rule Charter measures. Both King and Snohomish counties failed in their first election attempts.

Home Rule in Spokane County

For over 10 years (from 1968) very few individuals and no organizations spoke publicly to join the League of Women Voters in advocating a Spokane County Home Rule Charter. Many dissatisfactions with local government grew during the 1970s.

In 1979 a community-wide committee to study local government was formed. The Spokane Area Government Study Committee brought together many area leaders who agreed that a comprehensive study by an outside recognized authority was needed. Money was raised, and a contract with Stanford Research International was signed. Early in 1980 the SRI report directed by Dr. Thomas W. Fletcher was presented.

Dr. Fletcher recommended that Spokane needs (1) A County Home Rule Charter, (2) A Port District, (3) Strengthening of Regional Planning Conference, (4) Sharing of revenues from growth.

The Study Committee was expanded and reorganized and named Century II. There were subcommittees to implement each of the four recommendations. The Home Rule Charter was stalled in a government structures sub-committee because there was real division of support for that recommendation. Many very vocal leaders could not give up the idea of city-county consolidation, and some could not give up a Home Rule Charter. The Port District was defeated by the voters; the attempt to consolidate city and county planning departments did not materialize; the possibility of sharing revenues may happen if some cooperative efforts continue.

Dr. Fletcher recommended that all four of the above could and should be done as soon as possible.

In the 1984 report from the State Auditors Examination of Spokane County for fiscal 1983 this summation appeared:

"A comprehensive system of internal accounting controls could have prevented these problems. The absence of such controls has resulted from the county's accounting system outgrowing its existing controls. Furthermore, the county's organizational structure limits its ability to provide for accounting expertise as a senior management level because the authority over the accounting system is divided among several elective offices."

The most recent comprehensive study was one written by Jack Geraghty for the Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce. All of the governmental alternatives were evaluated with a recommendation to proceed to work for a County Home Rule Charter because it is the most acceptable and viable alternative for the immediate future. The Valley Chamber did in fact adopt that stand, early in 1985.

Advantages to a County Home Rule Charter

1. County government could be organized with a structure based upon principles of good government:
 - separation of legislative and executive with checks and balances
 - clear lines of administrative authority
 - better representation of the voters
 - a single comprehensive budget
 - personnel system based upon merit
 - department heads appointed for job qualifications
 - the right of initiative and referendum
 - a board of appeals
 - procedure for charter review and amendment.
2. Charter would provide local autonomy with less state legislative control.
3. Charter could not raise the current level of taxation.
4. Home Rule Charter process could start immediately and benefit from examples of working charters in the state.

Disadvantages to a County Home Rule Charter

1. Charter does not provide for increased financial flexibility. Any service expansion would have to come from efficiency or savings in operation.
2. Stronger county could increase competition between city and county.
3. Does not provide a single government to address the urban problems of the whole urban area.
4. Separate planning....A stronger county government could have less incentive for coordinated regional planning with the cities.
5. The need for additional revenues to provide for urban services could increase the county's drive for an increased tax base from industrial and commercial development.

IN CONCLUSION

It should be remembered that citizen interest in local government structure is seldom easily aroused. Most governmental changes have followed a crisis, scandal, or very critical threat to the voters. In a paper on Metropolitan Seattle Reorganization Study, David H. Shinn analyzed many governmental reorganizations and failures to enact changes. Mr. Shinn, employed in the Seattle office of Policy Planning, wrote, "Five of the seven reorganized governments, those involving the most radical change, were preceded by an unusual situation or confronted with a critical issue.A review of seven reorganization efforts that failed to obtain approval indicates that there was no central issue or special circumstance which served to mobilize local residents to campaign for or even vote for major structural change."

Dr. Florestano from Maryland made this observation when she spoke here in Spokane:

"Citizens are not interested in change that simply produces a neater or more rational structure. They want effective government with an emphasis upon service. Citizens want results--not grandiose reorganization that threatens conflict. Under normal circumstances, citizens commonly exhibit a natural resistance to change. If voters do not understand the issue or recognize that there is a problem, they will not vote for change."

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Table 13

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME-RULE CHARTERS
KING, CLALLAM, WHATCOM, SNOHOMISH AND PIERCE COUNTIES

	King	Clallam	Whatcom	Snohomish	Pierce
Legislative body	9 council members	3 commissioners	7 council members	5 council members	7 council members
Nominated	In district	In district	6 in district	In district	In district
Elected	In district	At-large countywide	At-large countywide	In district	In district
Partisan/Non-partisan	Partisan or independent	Partisan or independent	Nonpartisan	Partisan or independent	Not specified
Signatures required for:					
Referendum	8% of votes cast in county executive election	10% of votes cast in last Governor's election	10% of votes cast in last Governor's election	5% of votes cast in last Governor's election	8% of votes cast in last executive election
Initiative	10% of voters cast in last county executive election	10% of votes cast in last Governor's election	15% of votes cast in last Governor's election	7% of votes cast in last Governor's election	10% of votes cast in last executive election
Executive: election, salary	Separately elected, partisan, salary 1-1/2 X council salary; Administrative Officer appointed by executive	County Commissioners, salary set by ordinance; Administrative Coordinator appointed by commissioners	Separately elected, nonpartisan, salary set by ordinance; council salary no more than 15% of executive's	Separately elected, partisan, salary set by ordinance.	Separately elected, salary set by ordinance
Other elected administrative officials	Assessor	Assessor Auditor Treasurer Sheriff	Assessor Auditor Treasurer Sheriff	Assessor Auditor Treasurer Sheriff Clerk	Assessor/treasurer Auditor

Addendum (2020)

Dates of adoption of above: King County 1969, Clallam County 1977, Whatcom County 1979, Snohomish County 1980, and Pierce County 1981.

Since this report was published in 1985 two additional counties have adopted Charters: San Juan County in 2006 and Clark County in 2015 (in 1982 Clark County had rejected their Freeholder Process City/County Consolidation; and in 2002 a County Home Rule Charter was narrowly defeated.) *Municipal Research and Services Center - mrsc.org*