



## King County

### **Dow Constantine**

King County Executive

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August 8, 2012

Jeffrey Goltz, Chair  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chair Goltz:

I am writing to request that the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) investigate the recent service disruptions resulting from the labor dispute involving Waste Management.

The disruptions caused by the recent Waste Management strike were significant throughout King County. The strike left thousands of our residents without garbage, organics or recyclables collection services – with some residents missing two weekly collections.

Residents and businesses within cities that contract for solid waste services may rely on the protections that those contracts provide. However, certain cities – and the unincorporated areas of King County – must rely on the WUTC to regulate garbage collection that occurs under state franchises. The State of Washington entrusts Waste Management and other franchise holders with the vital public service of garbage collection.

Although King County does not have authority under State law to provide collection services, the County provides solid waste disposal services. The strike also posed significant operational challenges for King County as self-haul to our disposal facilities increased dramatically during the strike. Our employees worked tirelessly to help ensure that public health and safety were still protected, despite these challenges.

As the entity responsible for solid waste disposal in King County, we are conducting our own review of the impacts of the strike. However, our solid waste division received numerous inquiries and complaints related to the strike, and I urge the WUTC to conduct a thorough investigation and to use its regulatory authority to ensure that residents and businesses whose collections were disrupted are made whole.

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I appreciate the WUTC's investigation into the strike. As part of that process, I also urge the WUTC to:

- Evaluate and enhance the reporting requirements for franchise-holders such as Waste Management during strikes and other service disruptions.
- Institute formal communications protocols to ensure that the County and its cities have current, accurate information to provide to residents and businesses who are impacted. This should include regular updates provided by video conferencing, the web, or other timely, two-way communication technology.
- Institute procedures for compensating counties for providing free disposal services to residents and businesses during labor disputes against private haulers.
- Institute rule changes to provide counties with a formal input and coordination role in labor disputes or other circumstances causing service disruptions in areas served by WUTC-franchised haulers.

Thank you for your work to investigate the recent Waste Management service disruptions and to institute changes to help lessen impacts on our residents in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dow Constantine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "D".

Dow Constantine  
King County Executive