

STATEMENT OF RON SIMS REGARDING
NOMINATION TO BECOME DEPUTY SECRETARY OF HUD

February 2, 2009

President Barack Obama today announced his intent to nominate me as the next Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I thank the President for this honor. I am deeply grateful and overwhelmed by his trust and confidence in me.

I also want to thank Secretary Shaun Donovan for his support. If confirmed by the United States Senate, I will serve the President and give his administration and our country my very best.

I want to thank the citizens of King County who have given me the opportunity to serve 12 years as County Executive and 11 years as Councilmember. I cannot imagine anyone more fortunate than I to have spent the better part of my public service career working on issues I care about in a region that I love.

Leaving King County government will be very difficult for me. In my mind and heart, I see and feel the work that needs to be done to complete the transformation of this region into the best place in the world.

Nearly a year ago, the Seattle Times ran my editorial announcing King County's Equity and Social Justice Initiative. In that editorial I reminded us all that four decades after the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we remain a society burdened by vast disparities in wealth, in health and in opportunity. Not just in this country, but also in our county; the only one in America named after Dr. King.

I wrote with regret that "the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening..." and that "while many of our communities are thriving, others foster conditions that lead to poor health, underemployment, poor education, incarceration, loss of opportunity and unsafe living."

I lamented that decades of misguided policies at the federal, state and local level have contributed to the problem; policies that have isolated the poorest urban neighborhoods from economic opportunities, and disenfranchised communities trying to do better.

I said then, and I believe now that "we all need to own the reality of inequity" and we need empowered community voices to partner with government in shaping decisions to attack inequities at their sources and solve them.

I did not and do not believe these inequities are either natural or inevitable. I have devoted my life to reversing these courses.

I very much wanted to meet these challenges when I announced my intention to run again as County Executive. Little did I realize that the opportunity to do so would present itself at the national level. But as John Lennon sang "life is just what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

I have been asked by President Obama and Secretary Donovan to manage the day to day operations of HUD's 8,500 employees and 39 billion dollar budget. President Obama has also challenged his Cabinet to prepare for the age of global warming. Success can only come if we transform our major metropolitan areas. King County is widely recognized for its cutting edge work on both climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction. Therefore, if confirmed, Secretary Donovan will assign me to oversee HUD's critical role in protecting our economic

pro prowess and improving the quality of life for the residents of our metropolitan centers while cutting emissions and preparing us for a warmer world.

There is no leader more committed to our communities than President Obama; and no champion superior to Secretary Donovan who is charting a new aggressive course for HUD. I am truly humbled to be asked to join this team.

As I mentioned, this decision was not an easy one for me. I am fully aware my stepping down creates a disturbance for King County government and for the region for which I care so deeply. The financial well being of all counties, the survival of public health and the future of transportation, tolling and transit are being debated right now in Olympia. King County must remain a strong voice in these debates. King County must remain well managed through the transition to the next Executive. These issues weigh heavily upon me and I have given a great deal of thought to how such a transition can occur most effectively for the people of King County.

If I leave, my replacement as Executive will be chosen by a vote of the King County Council. With due respect to the Council, I would like to offer advice on how to transition to a new Executive.

I would suggest that the Council select a caretaker Executive to serve out the remainder of 2009. This interim Executive should be a person of unquestioned experience, stature and integrity who has no intention of running in the November 2009 election. There are many in our community that could be trusted with such stewardship.

Why a caretaker? Because this is a unique election and the people of King County must make this decision. Last November the voters overwhelmingly decided to make the positions of King County Executive and Council non-partisan. The first truly non-partisan Executive should be selected by the public, not by politicians. In this historic election, with so much at stake, voters should be allowed to select from a field of exceptional candidates, fully vetted by the crucible of a public campaign.

There are outstanding Washington State legislators in both the House and the Senate who deserve the opportunity to complete the legislative session and still compete for this office. This may also be the first time in the history of King County that the Executive can be elected from outside of Seattle. There are extraordinary individuals from the suburbs who merit strong consideration. All candidates deserve a level playing field, not one handicapped by running against an incumbent with a head-start. A caretaker Executive will provide the stability necessary to allow a full election to take place. A caretaker Executive will be able to make the right decisions for the future of King County without worrying about the politics of reelection.

But as I said, ultimately this decision will be made by the Council, not me. I do not envy them the task but I do pledge my support to make the decision and the transition as smooth and as seamless as possible.

Before I answer your questions I want to conclude by extending my heartfelt and sincere thanks to my Executive Office, my Budget Office, my Cabinet, and all the exceptional employees of King County. I will miss you all more than you can ever know. In selecting me, President Obama was really acknowledging the excellence of each and every one of you. I am proud to have served among such stellar employees.

I look forward to this opportunity to serve our President and our great country.

Thank you.